United Nations S/PV.6391

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6391 st meeting

Tuesday, 28 September 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Apakan	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Yang Tao
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. Anderson

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/471)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-55258 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/471)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mrs. Bangura (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I wish to extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Michael von der Schulenberg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Von der Schulenberg to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. John McNee, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. McNee to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2010/471, containing the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Michael von der Schulenberg and His Excellency Mr. John McNee. I now give the floor to Mr. Von der Schulenberg.

Mr. Von der Schulenburg: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to introduce the fifth Report of the Secretary-General on Sierra Leone (S/2010/471).

When the Secretary-General visited Freetown on 14 and 15 June, he wanted to draw attention to Sierra Leone's extraordinary achievements in regaining its peace and stability since the end of its civil war. Indeed, Sierra Leone is a country that was able to leave years of dictatorships, repeated military coups and 11 years of a devastating civil war behind it and to embark on building a new peaceful, democratic and more prosperous society. In the more recent period, Sierra Leone has made considerable economic and social progress. The Government has mastered successfully the impact of the recent global food and financial crises in the country, engaged in an ambitious infrastructure development programme, improved agricultural production and increased energy production.

Against the background of the ongoing review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Government's efforts to provide free medical care to mothers and children under five, its successful programmes to fight HIV/AIDS and malaria, its commercialization programme for small and often desperately poor farmers, and the construction of feeder roads connecting isolated villages to the national road grid are of particular importance. It is

therefore not surprising that Sierra Leone has made steady progress towards achieving the MDG.

In this context, we have also to recognize the considerable long-term support that Sierra Leone has received and still receives from the international community. In particular, we commend President Koroma's commitment to creating Africa's only second independent public broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, which was inaugurated during the Secretary-General's visit. The Corporation is still in its infancy and will have to overcome many challenges to live up to its aspirations and our expectations for it as a professional and impartial voice for Sierra Leone and, it is to be hoped, one day for the subregion. But I am convinced that the enthusiasm and integrity of its independent board members will make it a reliable and impartial voice for Sierra Leone's newly found democracy and an example for other countries in the region to follow.

I will not expand further here on these development issues, as we will discuss them at the Peacebuilding Commission meeting this afternoon. Instead, I would like to use this opportunity to concentrate on three more recent developments that could have a major impact on shaping Sierra Leone's political, social and economic future: first, the Government's efforts to make greater use of the country's mineral and natural resources; secondly, the preparations for the 2012 elections; and thirdly, developments in neighbouring Guinea.

All three of these developments have the potential to bring great benefits to Sierra Leone. The increase in the exploitation of Sierra Leone's rich mineral resources could help break the country's high donor dependency and give it the resources needed to pursue its development goals more aggressively. The 2012 elections could strengthen the country's still young democracy, increase the credibility of State institutions and ultimately help Sierra Leone to cross the magic line of its tenth year since the end of the civil war. Finally, elections and a successful democratic transition in Guinea could, for the first time, create a subregion of like-minded States and open the potential for greater cooperation among the three countries of the Mano River Union in solving many of the shared problems.

While these three developments are indeed a source of hope for Sierra Leone, they also bear considerable risks for its future that, if not managed carefully, could have adverse impacts on the progress made in Sierra Leone in recent years. I shall first talk about the recent mining contracts.

Sierra Leone is a country endowed with rich natural and mineral resources. To manage its mineral resources better, the Government enacted a new mining law last year and began, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to renegotiate existing mining contracts for the exploitation of diamonds and rutile, a precursor for the production of titanium. More recently, the Government concluded two significant mining contracts for the exploitation of the country's large iron ore resources that could give extractive industries in Sierra Leone's economy an unprecedented dominant role. In fact, with its largely unexploited gold resources and the potential of economically viable off-shore oil and gas reserves, Sierra Leone may be on the verge of turning from a major recipient of foreign aid to becoming a major exporter of primary mineral and hydrocarbon products. This is surely a welcome development for Sierra Leone, as well as for an international community that has invested so much in Sierra Leone's stability and development over the past 10 years or more.

However, experiences in different parts of the world suggest that countries depending on the export of raw materials are often plagued with great difficulties. Dependence on mining and oil exports has often resulted in social dislocations, huge income disparities and rampant corruption that have at times erupted into violent internal conflicts. In fact, Sierra Leone itself has had such bitter experience in the past. Today, its formerly diamond-rich district of Kono is one of the poorest areas of Sierra Leone, with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, especially among its youth. Much of its once fertile agricultural lands are now dotted with water-logged holes and Kono's destroyed infrastructure. The many burned-out houses still bear witness to the destructive force of a civil war that was largely funded by so-called blood diamonds from that very district.

It is the sheer size of the two iron ore mining contracts that elicit unease, as they could become a game-changer for Sierra Leone, with the potential to dramatically change the country's economic, social and political landscape. This applies in particular to the mining agreement for the large Tonkolili iron ore deposits. If official pronouncements are correct, the

financial turnover of that mining operation alone would dwarf the financial and organizational capacities of the Government itself.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all concerned, in particular the Government of Sierra Leone, to make all the necessary efforts to ensure that its emphasis on extractive industries is put on the right track from the very beginning. Concerns about the mining agreements — especially their compliance with Sierra Leone's mining law, the transparency of contract negotiations or concerns about how much economic power has been given to a single external investor — should be taken seriously. Further, concerns about the influence that such huge commercial interests could have on the integrity of an underpaid public service, the media and civil society will require attention.

I am convinced that even large-scale mining contracts can be managed in a way that both the international investor and the country will emerge as winners. Against that background, I welcome the assurances given by President Koroma of his determination to ensure that all mining agreements will be compliant with Sierra Leone's laws and with international practices, to increase transparency in the mining sector, and to seek external assistance in beefing up national capacities to deal with the challenges of large-scale mining concessions. I also wish to express gratitude to the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and, closer to home, UNDP for their offers of assistance to enable the Government to manage this critical aspect of Sierra Leone's development.

I shall now turn to the elections. The next nationwide elections in Sierra Leone will be held in the latter part of 2012 — that is, only two years from now. Despite the remaining time, it feels as if the electoral campaign has already started. Press statements, interviews, relatively unimportant by-elections and even certain other social events are taking on the form of early electoral campaigns. Regrettably, the main political parties accuse each other of shady intentions, and the opposition has expressed increasing mistrust of the impartiality of key State institutions. There are fears that both sides could try to prevent the other from campaigning legitimately in their respective political strongholds. Recent by-elections for parliamentary and local council seats also witnessed similar incidents, as well as violence or the threat of violence.

All indications are that the 2012 elections could be challenging and complex. This is partly due to the fact that the country will run three nation-wide elections at the same time: presidential, parliamentary and local council elections. But also other factors — such as a winner-take-all electoral system, a likely two-party contest, both with their regional strongholds, temptations to exploit regional and ethnic differences as well as the newly found wealth from recent mining contracts — could all contribute to highly contested and potentially difficult elections.

To mitigate conflicts in the run-up to and during the 2012 elections, it is critical that the institutional framework responsible for conducting the elections be accepted by all sides as being professional, credible and, even more important, impartial. This applies in particular to the two main electoral bodies: the National Electoral Commission and the Political Party Registration Commission. Other national institutions, such as the Sierra Leone police, the Independent Media Commission and the newly established Independent Broadcasting Corporation also have very important roles to play in this context. In view of that, serious efforts should be made to address all outstanding issues involving electoral management bodies and other relevant institutions well in advance of the elections.

In this context, I would like to urge the National Electoral Commission to do more to alleviate fears within the main opposition following the reappointment of the chief electoral officer. At the same time, I call on the main opposition party to show greater flexibility in discussing their electoral concerns without getting entangled in personality conflicts. Although much work has been done in strengthening the Political Party Registration Commission to carry out its important regulatory and mediation functions, its effectiveness is hampered by the fact that its chair has been vacant for over two years.

We are pleased to note that the Sierra Leone police and its leadership have committed themselves to regular dialogue with all political parties and to protect the operational impartiality and professionalism of the force in providing security during the electoral process. The police should increase its capacity in non-lethal crowd-control techniques and refrain from any temptation to use assault weapons in social

disturbances. An early establishment of an independent police complaints committee, as envisaged in the joint communiqué, will also greatly enhance confidence in the police.

The role of the media in the electoral process will be critical and the Independent Media Commission is expected to protect the media from undue political and commercial influences. In this context, the creation of the Guild of Editors of the major newspapers is a very welcome initiative.

If the 2007 and 2008 elections or recent by-elections are any indication, ethnicity and regional divisions may play a much greater role in the upcoming elections. This could add a dangerous dimension to the elections. I therefore hope that more efforts will be made by all political stakeholders to defuse this potential for conflict well in advance of the election. This could also include greater efforts by the Government to create a better regional balance in appointments of its senior political and civil service positions.

Finally, we are concerned about the Government's intention to hold an inquest into the 1992 extrajudicial executions by the former military Government, the National Provisional Ruling Council, which ruled the country between 1992 and 1996. This action by the Government could be misunderstood by many in the opposition as an effort to influence the 2012 elections and could open the way for demands for all sorts of new inquests into past atrocities. If the Government proceeds with the inquest, it should make its intentions much clearer in order to obviate misinterpretations later.

Let me now turn to the third issue: Guinea. It may be no surprise to Council members that Sierra Leoneans look with apprehension at developments in its larger neighbour, Guinea. There is much at stake for Sierra Leone. Should Guinea manage its democratic transition well, it would make the subregion more stable and give Sierra Leone wider options in solving subregional problems, including cross-border trading and subregional security concerns such as illicit drug trafficking and illegal fishing. However, should the democratic transition in Guinea be stalled or even reversed, that could have serious negative consequences for Sierra Leone. The ethnic, cultural and geographical links between the two countries, the long border with a number of yet unsolved issues, as well as the large quantities of small weapons in Guinea, could make any potential conflict in Guinea trickle down into Sierra Leone.

Against this background, I feel that we should all commend President Koroma and his Liberian counterpart, President Johnson-Sirleaf for their careful approach in support of the democratic transition in their fellow neighbouring country.

Finally, let me use this opportunity to share with this Council some concerns about our own integrated peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone. When the Secretary-General visited Sierra Leone, he wanted also to draw attention to a successful United Nations intervention and in particular to the new model of an integrated peacebuilding mission that could serve as an example to other United Nations interventions. We have been able to prove that it is possible to draw down from one of the largest peacekeeping missions into a much smaller and purely civilian mission while maintaining a credible political and development engagement in the country. As I mentioned before, the new peacebuilding mission costs Member States only 2.2 per cent of the previous peacekeeping operations.

Unfortunately, all of these successes and savings have not translated into any increase in United Nations financial resources for development purposes, in Sierra Leone a key factor for our peacebuilding strategy. In fact, funding to United Nations operations is steadily declining. This is a worrying trend as it will no doubt jeopardize the United Nations work and credibility. It could also jeopardize the integrated approach to peacebuilding. I intend to discuss this issue in more detail at the Peacebuilding Commission meeting this afternoon but would appreciate also the Council's continued support.

Sierra Leone may today no longer be one of the Council's most critical concerns today. And this is a good sign. But I would urge the Council not to abandon Sierra Leone completely: it is a potential success story, not only for Sierra Leone but also for the Security Council. Sierra Leone will continue to need the Council as the United Nations will continue to need Sierra Leone.

Finally, let me express here my thanks through the Minister for Foreign Affairs to President Koroma and his Government, members of the political parties and civil society in Sierra Leone for their cooperation and hospitality.

The President: I thank Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. McNee.

Mr. McNee: I am pleased to have the opportunity to brief the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. While the past year has seen Sierra Leone make considerable strides forward, significant challenges remain. Ten years after the end of the civil war and two years ahead of the third set of national elections, Sierra Leone stands poised to consolidate peace fully and embark on long-term economic development. Doing so successfully will require continued support.

The Peacebuilding Commission is currently considering the progress that has been achieved in consolidating peace in Sierra Leone and is charting its future engagement. Indeed, the Sierra Leone configuration will meet this afternoon to discuss these issues and adopt an outcome document containing conclusions and recommendations. This review process has focused on the joint progress report on the Agenda for Change prepared by the Government of Sierra Leone in full collaboration with the United Nations, international partners and civil society.

The report in our view is an impressive achievement. Its preparation reflected strong national ownership and included the participation of a wide range of national stakeholders, including civil society. Its findings are comprehensive, mapping progress across the entire Agenda for Change and providing important recommendations for future action. Given that the review monitors progress on the basis of all actors' contributions, it continues Sierra Leone's exemplary record as a country where standards for aid effectiveness, engagement in post-conflict States and integrated service delivery are put into practice.

As decided last year, the Peacebuilding Commission has focused its engagement on the major threats to peace consolidation identified in the Agenda for Change, specifically concerning good governance and the rule of law, youth employment and drug trafficking. There have been successes in each of those areas. The Anti-Corruption Commission continues its excellent work, now under the able leadership of a new Commissioner. The establishment of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation as an independent media organization will help further democratization. The Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force has been transformed into the Transnational Crime Unit under the West Africa Coast Initiative.

Sierra Leone has also made important changes to its youth employment and empowerment strategy, moving to better match skills-training and employment programmes with market demand. The creation and ongoing establishment of the National Youth Commission represents another significant step forward.

But to that list of successes one must add emerging needs. Attention is rightly turning to preparations for the 2012 elections, as Mr. Von der Schulenburg just noted. Those elections represent one of the significant remaining challenges before Sierra Leone completes the process of consolidating peace and embarks on longer-term development.

It is essential that political conditions be established for free, fair and peaceful elections. That will require continued progress on implementing the agreements in the joint communiqué of April 2009, further strengthening the Political Parties Registration Commission and providing the National Electoral Commission with the necessary support. Continuing to build the capacity of the Sierra Leone police to serve as a neutral and effective force for stability will also be critical. Most important, it is imperative that the major political parties engage in a manner that reinforces peaceful democratic governance and mitigates burgeoning regional tensions within the country.

The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), under the able leadership of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, has already conducted a series of activities intended to improve multiparty dialogue, mediate wider political tensions and build capacity to respond to incidents of public disorder. It is clear that this particular aspect of UNIPSIL's mandate will be of growing importance over the next year. Sierra Leone is also increasingly taking advantage of its abundant natural resources. The latent economic potential of the mining sector in particular holds great promise for generating growth, strengthening Sierra Leone's budget and reducing dependency on aid.

Yet, as we have all seen in other contexts, natural resources also bring risks. Resources must be managed in a transparent manner that delivers the economic benefits of a peace dividend to the population as a

whole. Sierra Leone's membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Kimberly Process are important initiatives in that respect.

(*spoke in French*)

Let me conclude by turning to a crucial issue with respect to peacebuilding. For the most part, Sierra Leone has established the strategic and institutional mechanisms needed to coordinate and implement peacebuilding activities. In the Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision, the country has two comprehensive and integrated strategies. Yet the need for resources remains significant.

The United Nations multi-donor trust fund established to fund the Joint Vision and, in that regard, to support the Agenda for Change, has to date received only $10 million towards a multi-year target of $204 million. While the international community has been quick to commend the particular model of integrated peacebuilding developed in the country, it has been slower to mobilize resources. Recognizing this need, the Sierra Leone configuration has decided to develop a resource mobilization plan to help meet current funding targets, attract non-traditional donors and explore alternate means of providing international assistance.

Sierra Leone remains a multilateral success story in peacebuilding, but the country is at a critical juncture. A final investment in peace is necessary to secure the gains that have been made since the end of the civil war. The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to continue assisting Sierra Leone's efforts to mitigate the major threats to peace. It also wants to support the country in the preparations for the holding of free, fair and peaceful elections in 2012. Lastly, the Peacebuilding Commission is determined to assist the country to build a durable and comprehensive peace to the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans.

The President: I thank Mr. McNee for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Bangura (Sierra Leone): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. We would also like to thank you for convening this meeting on the situation in Sierra Leone and for giving us the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

We also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his detailed report (S/2010/471) on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). Among other things, the report highlights the important developments that have taken place in the country, the challenges to surmount and, of course, the activities of UNIPSIL during the period under review. The recent visit of the Secretary-General to our country was particularly productive and remains fresh in the minds of all Sierra Leoneans, as it coincided with the inauguration of the second-ever independent public broadcaster in Africa, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation.

We would also like to pay particular tribute to the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for his statement this morning, as well as to the Chair of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration, Ambassador John McNee, for his usual meaningful and instructive contribution to this debate.

For due economy of time, I will resist the temptation to recount in detail all the important developments that have taken place in my country during the period under review, as President Ernest Bai Koroma, in addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, already did so five days ago by outlining some of the visible progress his Government has made during that time, in partnership with the international community, in the process of consolidating peace and security to promote economic growth and development.

Many of those efforts and successes, which are also reflected in the report before us today, have equally been acclaimed in indicators, such as those of the Global Peace Index, which ranks Sierra Leone as the fifty-third most peaceful country in the world; the Mo Ibrahim Index, which reflects our significantly improved ranking in democratic governance among crisis-affected countries; the World Bank rankings on doing business; and the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, among others. However, the President was very forthright in cautioning against complacency based on our achievements so far and in asserting that those accolades should serve as a catalyst for the Government to intensify its efforts to improve the quality of life of its people.

The Government is fully cognizant of the importance of some of the issues that the Secretary-General raises in the report with regard to the implementation of the joint communiqué of 2 April 2009, in particular with respect to such matters as the dialogue among political parties, the report of the Independent Review Panel, the proposed inquest into the executions, on 29 December 1992, of a former inspector-general of the police and 27 others, and the enhancement of the political participation of women in Sierra Leone.

With respect to furthering the culture of political tolerance, President Koroma has consistently emphasized that, irrespective of political affiliation or religious denomination, the bonds of unity that bind us together as a nation are stronger than the issues that have a tendency to divide us. In one such instance, he reassured the country by asserting:

> "I am President of the country and I have a responsibility to unify the country. I have a responsibility to let everybody develop a new concept of democracy, a new culture of democracy, and that is, you are not enemy with anybody. You are just maybe opponents on political issues, but at the end of the day we must present ourselves as Sierra Leoneans, united in the development of our country."

On various occasions, he has extended the olive branch and has been quick to point out that tolerance is a two-way street and that all Sierra Leoneans should strive for a unified nation. He has demonstrated his commitment to deepening the democratic process and unifying the country, not only by his regular visits around the country, but also by ensuring that the development programmes initiated by the Government are implemented fairly throughout the country, irrespective of the political leanings or ethnicity of any particular region or locale.

The Government is fully committed to strengthening governance and private sector development. The fight against corruption is unrelenting. A new anti-corruption Commissioner has been appointed, and the Government continues to provide financial support for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy. The commitment to fighting drug trafficking and transnational organized crime is equally vigorous. We have transformed the Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force into the Transnational Crime Unit, with much greater leverage to eradicate that pernicious menace. However, it is greatly in need of sustained technical assistance and support.

On another major front in the ongoing peacebuilding initiative, we have been able to take further steps to address the concerns of the young people of the country. A Youth Commissioner was recently appointed to lead the National Youth Commission, established to formulate strategy and policy related to the empowerment and involvement of the youth population in nation-building and national development. That clearly signals the Commission's readiness to undertake its responsibilities and to start work on implementing its strategies. We would therefore appreciate more concrete support from all our partners, including those that have been actively involved in addressing that challenge.

With respect to the forthcoming 2012 elections, the Government is committed to ensuring that the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission deliver effectively on their constitutional mandate, independently and free of interference. In that regard, my colleague the Minister for Finance and Economic Development, has already started mobilizing support and the necessary resources to set the stage for a credible, free, fair and fully participatory process. We count on the United Nations and the international community to respond promptly and favourably to his call to action.

Achieving openness and transparency in the exploitation of our mineral resources is one of the most fundamental aspects of the Government's development policy, with the political will to ensure that the country's vast mineral wealth is exploited for the benefit of the people. To that end, the Government is very receptive to the concerns that have been raised over the mining agreements entered into recently, and is strongly disposed to put in place modalities to address those concerns with a view to ensuring full compliance with the country's mineral laws.

Despite the Government's efforts and the progress that has been made to date in addressing many of the problems that led to the civil war, challenges still abound. Some aspects of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission still require support for their full implementation. Most notably, the reparations process remains largely underfunded some

six years after the recommendations were issued. On the socio-economic front, the prevailing global economic and financial uncertainties are seriously undermining our efforts to turn around the economy as quickly as desired.

In view of the severe impact of those uncertainties on our efforts, we appeal for urgent and appropriate attention to be given to the delivery of the pledges made at the most recent Consultative Group meeting on Sierra Leone, held in London.

I would like to reiterate my Government's commitment to playing a constructive role in addressing the unfolding events and democratization process in the sister Republic of Guinea. We are satisfied that our National Electoral Commission was able to facilitate and ensure the enfranchisement of Guinean citizens in Sierra Leone, particularly within the context of the Mano River Union. In that regard, we will continue to monitor events with intense interest.

The Government is actively considering the report of the Independent Review Panel, as well as the proposed inquest into the extrajudicial executions of 29 December 1992, involving a former inspector-general and 27 other private citizens, with due regard to resolving this matter in the best interests of the nation.

In conclusion, I would like to register our gratitude to the members of Council for their sustained interest in and engagement with Sierra Leone. We look forward to their steadfast support of our continuing efforts to ensure sustainable peace and long-term prosperity in Sierra Leone and to keep this potential success story on course.

We share the concerns raised by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General on the steady decline in funding of United Nations operations, in particular UNIPSIL, and the adverse effect that it will have on the work and credibility of the United Nations. We hope that that decline will be effectively addressed by Council.

The President: I thank Minister Bangura for her statement.

There are no other speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.639

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisiona

6392nd meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Apakan	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Lutterotti
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/471)

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10-55432 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2010/471)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/495, which contains the text of a draft resolution concerning the measures imposed by resolution 1171 (1998) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997), submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/2010/496, which contains the text of a draft resolution on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Members of the Council further have before them document S/2010/471, which contains the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolutions to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2010/495, concerning the measures imposed by resolution 1171 (1998) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997).

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1940 (2010).

I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2010/496, on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1941 (2010).

I give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone): I have the privilege and honour to address the Security Council this morning to express our thanks and appreciation for the very effective and speedy way the Council has treated some of the issues affecting my country, Sierra Leone.

We are grateful that the Council has deliberated on this matter and that its voice was unanimous in arriving at decisions affecting the sanctions issue and the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. These

decisions mark a very important milestone in the ongoing recovery of my country from conflict. The lifting of the sanctions imposed on Sierra Leone serves as an important signal that we are indeed moving along the right path in our post-conflict recovery process.

Although of course there are still some bottlenecks to be resolved, we think that there will now at least be a free-trade flow of goods. Some other issues that were affecting the growth of the economy will now be resolved, and problems relating to insurance freight and some of the doubts that had been entertained about dealing with us because of the existence of the sanctions will now go away.

The Council's decision to lift the remaining sanctions on Sierra Leone has created quite an important enabling environment for the Government to continue the implementation of the priorities it has laid out for itself based on the Agenda for Change. The multiplier effects of peace consolidation and economic development will of course undoubtedly continue.

I would also like to acknowledge and commend the Council's very speedy response and action, and we hope that this unanimity will continue. For our part, the political will is there, and we will continue to make sure that we do not disappoint expectations and that the trust and confidence shown in Sierra Leone are not misplaced. We will continue to do our part to make sure that we follow the dictates of international norms and pursue the right path. We thank Council members for their magnanimity, and will never forget it.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6393

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6393rd meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2010, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Apakan	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Lutterotti
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Letter dated 14 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/485)

Letter dated 17 September 2010 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/486)

Letter dated 23 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/493)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-55486 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Letter dated 14 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/485)

Letter dated 17 September 2010 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/486)

Letter dated 23 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2010/493)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. N'Gbichi (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/499, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2010/485, containing a letter dated 14 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council; document S/2010/486, containing a letter dated 17 September 2010 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General; and document S/2010/493, containing a letter dated 23 September 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1942 (2010).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6394

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6394th meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2010, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Apakan	(Turkey)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/463)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-55499 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/463)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests that the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. I have also received letters from the representatives of Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Italy, New Zealand, Norway and Pakistan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. De Mistura to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Serrano to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of members to document S/2010/463, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. De Mistura: I thank you, Sir, for giving us the opportunity on behalf of the whole United Nations system in Afghanistan to give the Council a brief update.

Much has happened, as is often the case in Afghanistan, during these past few months. Since my last briefing (see S/PV.6351), some key events have taken place. I would like to review some of those events, which preceded the recent and highly anticipated parliamentary elections, in order not to lose sight of the progress that is being made in Afghanistan.

Let me begin with something the Council is very familiar with, since many of us attended it at the time — the Kabul Conference. The Conference, which was held on 20 July, did indeed reinforce the Government's commitment to assuming greater control of its own future. That was the message we got from the Conference. The substantive preparations undertaken, and which addressed a lot of varied issues, involved extensive cooperation between ministries and required a high level of engagement on the part of the international community with the Afghan authorities and with civil society. The Government of Afghanistan, including its own Afghan National Security Forces — and I am glad to see that our friend the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan is here with us to hear it publicly — should

be commended, because everyone who attended the Conference was impressed with the way it was organized and how it unfolded. It required a lot of logistical, organizational and substantive preparations.

The Conference was a key moment in the Kabul process, as we call it now, that began with President Karzai's second inaugural speech. While that speech set a broad governing agenda, the Conference added details to that agenda by elaborating a series of joint commitments. These commitments include the development of a framework, clear timelines, benchmarks for national priority programmes, progress towards the Afghan security lead, improvement in governance and, of course, the very serious and important issue of tackling corruption.

Since the Conference, the Government has taken a number of important steps in terms of technical planning. First, it has indicated its intention — and we confirm that this is taking place — to continue, through the cluster approach — that is, various ministries working together with the international community — to pursue agreed priorities. That was the bottom line of the Conference: trying to identify priorities with which we could all realign our own priorities. Secondly, it has begun to roll out the 21 national priority programmes agreed on at the Conference. Thirdly, the Government has made an immediate start to public finance management reforms, which are a concern to everyone, including a review of 14 line ministries, led by the Ministry of Finance. Fourthly, the Government has indicated that it will make a start on tackling the anti-corruption agenda agreed at the Conference, which also includes the creation of a joint monitoring and evaluation committee by the end of this month.

Let us now look at one issue that has been front and centre for us over the past few months — the elections. The campaign period for the elections ran from 23 June to 15 September, and frankly — we were discussing this just this morning — it was characterized by a very big change from in the events of 2005. People were showing their faces, people were campaigning, and women were present. There was an active and very creative style of campaigning in these elections.

More than 2,500 candidates — actually, 2,521 — stood for re-election, including almost 400 women — 398, to be precise. Of those, only one withdrew during the campaign, while two men did. That also shows the level of courage and determination they displayed in wanting to be part of this democratic process, as complicated and, sometimes, as difficult as it might be. Of the 249 sitting Members of Parliament, 229 sought re-election, demonstrating their own interest, and also, to a certain degree, their confidence in the democratic system in Afghanistan. Of the 2,521 candidates, there were many new entrants and many new, young faces. Of course, it remains to be seen where they are at the end of this process.

We must not forget that one of the main achievements of these elections is the fact that they actually took place. Afghanistan is still a country in a very tense conflict. The fact that an election took place at all, not least in such a short time after the previous one and during a comparatively more volatile period — because security has not improved; in fact the contrary is true — is an accomplishment in itself.

And, while there were no high-profile incidents, quite a number of security incidents did occur. They were not sufficient, however, to disrupt the elections overall. The proof is that almost 4.3 million votes were cast. Of course, we will now need to see how many actual voters were part of that, but this is quite an achievement compared to the previous and current environment. While the consolidation of the figures on security is still going on, election day security incidents were estimated at about 490, compared to 290 in the previous election. That represents a big difference, but the impact of those incidents was basically comparable, if not less. Again, the proof is that people went to vote. The incidents' intensity was lower. The overall deterioration of the security situation from last year to this was in any case greater, so that also has to be taken into consideration. About 1.6 million of the 4.3 million ballots cast to date — we have to see how many voters that means — were in female polling stations, again an indicator of a direction that we should all welcome.

This is the point. According to all of us, frankly, it is too early to give an overall assessment of the elections, except for the fact that they took place and 4.3 million Afghans had the courage to go, and that according to many people the systems were better. But the outcome remains to be seen, and that is why we are being cautious about it.

We also need to see how even or uneven the actual turnout was over all the provinces and in the

country. According to everyone, the Independent Electoral Commission has demonstrated a significant improvement compared to last year's presidential election, despite immense security and logistical challenges. In contrast to last year, the location of all polling centres was announced publicly a month before polling day. The Council will remember that last year, during the presidential elections, the list of polling centres was publicized two days before voting, and that was the biggest reason why there was so much concern about fraud. This time it was publicized a month beforehand. That was probably the biggest mitigating measure that could have been taken to avoid massive and systemic fraud.

Despite significant challenges, the polling materials arrived on time in most places, and 5,510 polling centres opened, of the 5,897 that had been announced on 18 August.

Another major improvement was the security arrangements for the design, use and movement of sensitive materials, including ink. I think that Minister for Foreign Affairs Rassoul and I can still testify with our fingers that the ink that we used, at least, was quite indelible, and after 10 days I am still looking forward to getting rid of it. We publicly put our fingers in some bleaching products, and it is still there. That does not mean that in some places there was not some faking, but the ink that was provided on a massive scale for the election was quite good.

Having said that, the elections this time had a major security element, reassuring us that at least they would be much more monitored than in the past. We had 397,000 national observers, and they were observing the interests of each candidate on their own. They represented, in that sense, quite an impressive capacity, wanting to make sure that there would be no massive fraud, at least. The sensitive materials were also moved quite safely, in spite of the Taliban having twice threatened to disrupt that.

However, this is just the beginning of the process. That is why, on the Council's behalf, in Afghanistan and outside, we are now being cautious. We pushed, we tried to support the electoral mechanism to go forward, and we tried to encourage the Afghan people to feel that it was worth taking a risk because democracy was moving forward, but now we are being cautious, because we need to see what the outcome is.

Despite some retail fraud and, certainly, many problems, the outcome will very much depend on whether the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission will have the stamina, the courage, the neutrality and the determination to actually go over the 3,900 complaints received thus far and be able to say which are right and which are wrong, and take that decision before 30 October.

There are and there will be 2,000 losers — there are 2,521 candidates and 249 posts — and those losers are, unavoidably, already complaining. Again, the secret will be whether the electoral commissions will be able to stand in a credible way. We are ready to sustain and support them, but that is an Afghan responsibility.

Regarding conclusions on the election, on our side we should allow the requisite time for the process, which is until 30 October — 8 October for the preliminary outcome and 30 October for the final outcome, more or less, based on the hard work that they will have to do now. We must not make premature judgments. We should note that the positive improvements over last year's elections — from which we all, including the United Nations, have all drawn key lessons, by being careful in making any type of declaration about the outcome before it is clarified — make us cautious but supportive of the steps ahead in ensuring the integrity of the process and accountability to the Afghan people. The final comments will come at the end of the month.

Once the elections have been successfully concluded in one form or another, hopefully, the real discussion regarding the future of the electoral system and long-term electoral reform needs to be initiated. We already know that. Many here are already keen on that, and so are the Afghan people. UNAMA will work with the Government, with the electoral institutions and all relevant Afghan and international partners, in particular the European Union (EU).

The representative of the European Union, Vygaudas Ušackas — with whom, as the Council knows, we are working extremely closely — has already indicated publicly the interest of the EU in having a leading role in supporting the process of the electoral reform agenda with the Afghan Government. We will be supporting that ourselves. It will focus, most likely, on the electoral legal framework; the

sustainability of the electoral calendar, because we cannot have an election every three months; the long-term status of the Electoral Complaints Commission, which is only ad hoc, making it very fragile compared to the Independent Electoral Commission; a single nationwide electoral roll, because, as the Council knows, we do not have that; and, the mother of all issues, building the capacity of both electoral commissions.

So what is coming up on the radar? Well, the year began, as the Council knows, with setting a series of stepping stones. The first was the Istanbul conference. Then we had the London Conference, followed by the Consultative Peace Jirga, then the Kabul Conference and now the elections.

What is next? Well, a broader political process. We heard this, and yesterday we heard President Karzai elaborating on launching the high-level peace commission, with more than 67 members from all sides of Afghan society. We will focus on supporting that, on the basis of the mandate given to us by the Security Council, and on the Kabul process. At the same time we will watch with interest, and potentially with substantive support, the transition, which is probably going to be discussed at the Lisbon summit and then in Kabul.

I am glad to acknowledge the presence here of our colleague and friend, Mark Sedwill, who is the Senior Civilian Representative of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). I have had the opportunity on other occasions here to say how closely we have been working together and how important it is that we are working in that way in order to avoid any type of confusion and to ensure that the Afghans feel that we, on the international side, are all together in supporting the Afghan lead.

Today, I would like to highlight some of key conditions that are essential for the so-called road map on our side in the Kabul process. The Kabul process cannot be just a technocratic exercise. All partners need to engage politically behind the agenda. We know that we can count on President Karzai's leadership in this.

Secondly, we need to avoid new agendas or competing initiatives. We should focus on identifying the priorities that the Kabul Conference said that we need to tackle first, and concentrate our collective effort behind them. The Government has sent a signal regarding the priorities they seek to pursue: the rollout of national priority programmes and public finance management reform. We need to support that agenda, and we plan to work on it.

Thirdly, we, the international community, need to keep our own part of the bargain by aligning resources — or realigning resources — behind the Government priorities. The United Nations is committed in Kabul to a "one-UN" approach, so that we too contribute to the realigning and not just help in the realigning of other partners.

Fourthly, we must continue to strive to be more results-oriented, as the Afghan people are asking of us and the Afghan Government. I intend to work with the Government before the next meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, to be held at the end of November, to ensure that the Board, without having to create new bodies or new institutions, can be revitalized and be a follow-up to the actual Kabul follow-up conference. Of course, all of that will go forward only if it is moving towards a consolidated peace and reintegration programme within a complementary, structured political process that leads to a future Afghanistan reconciled on the basis of mutual respect.

There is a unanimous consensus in the international community that there is no military solution for Afghanistan. In the end, the solution can and should be political and Afghan, a solution that can only be supplemented with broader regional support and a solution that we can all work towards. Yesterday, the Government of Afghanistan took a very significant initial step, and UNAMA, in accordance with its mandate, will do all that it can to support it.

The next few months will be critical, first, in looking at the follow-up to the election, and secondly, in seeing how transition can become a concrete, well-organized and fair approach in the eyes of the Afghans and the international community.

Transition does not mean exit; it means transition, and the Government of Afghanistan will continue to receive all possible support from all of us with a view to bringing about what we are all hoping to see, namely, a peace and reconciliation initiative.

I will stop there, Mr. President, with your permission.

The President: I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan): At the outset, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting on the situation in Afghanistan and congratulate the Government of Turkey for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his most recent report on Afghanistan (S/2010/463) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his comprehensive briefing.

Today's meeting comes at a crucial time for Afghanistan, just over three months after the Kabul Conference and less than two weeks since the holding of our parliamentary elections. I am pleased to meet with the Security Council today to discuss the current situation in my country and shed light on the strategy we will pursue to end violence and achieve lasting peace and security.

I want to begin by saying a few words about our recent elections, which gave Afghans another chance to shape their future and consolidate our young democracy.

Millions of Afghans from all segments of society braved intimidations and threats of attacks, including assassination, to cast their vote. By doing so, Afghans reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to democracy and self-determination. The unprecedented number of young candidates and voters illustrates the degree to which democracy is taking root in Afghan society. Further, the significant increase in women's participation is testament to the further empowerment of women in Afghan political life.

Our elections were a major victory for democracy in Afghanistan. Let me take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to the United Nations and other partners for providing financial and technical support for the elections.

Just three months ago, Afghanistan and our international partners gathered at the international Kabul Conference to renew our partnership for lasting peace, security and stability. Together, we adopted the "Kabul Process", which focuses on increased Afghan leadership across the board. We also presented our 23 national priority programmes, including the national security policy and our national reconciliation initiative, all of which were endorsed by the international community.

Going forward, Afghanistan will pursue a comprehensive strategy to implement the outcome of the London and Kabul Conferences. We will work towards gradual leadership in all State affairs, in particular, security, development and governance. Our objective is clear: a gradual transfer of responsibilities towards self-reliance in ensuring social and economic opportunities for all Afghans and enforcing the rule of law throughout the country.

In the area of security, we will work to build the size, capacity and operational capability of Afghanistan's national security forces. In so doing, we will meet a vital precondition for taking the lead in combat operations in volatile provinces by 2011 and for independently meeting our security obligations by 2014, with international forces offering back-up support. I want to reiterate the importance, for achieving this goal, of sustained international support for the training, resourcing and equipping of the Afghan national security forces.

Moreover, we have committed to a comprehensive social and economic agenda to improve the lives of all Afghans and achieve a sustainable Afghan economy. In particular, we are giving special focus to agricultural development, rural rehabilitation, human resource development and economic and infrastructure development to generate employment opportunities and meet the immediate needs of our people. I seize this opportunity to convey Afghanistan's thanks and appreciation for the international community's support and assistance.

Meanwhile, it is should be noted that Afghanistan will not be able to attain its development goals without greater responsibility for its finances. Afghans must have a greater decision-making role in their own development. We welcome the international community's decision to channel 50 per cent of donor assistance through our national budget by January 2012. That will lead to greater transparency and efficiency in the utilization of development assistance coming from donor countries.

At the same time, we have embarked on a reinvigorated effort to combat corruption and

strengthen governance at all levels. Afghans are well aware of the detrimental effect of the menace of corruption and weak governance on the dignity, image and prosperity of our country. We are fully committed to effectively and resolutely ridding our society of corruption.

In less than two months, Afghanistan and its NATO partners will gather at the NATO Summit in Lisbon to crystallize our joint strategy for the transition to Afghan leadership in security matters in the country in the coming years. We will update our international partners on our progress in building our security forces and discuss remaining challenges to that effect.

For the transition to succeed, we first have to find a solution to Afghanistan's ongoing security problem. Afghanistan has endured violence for more than 30 years. Almost 10 years after the start of our joint efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, security remains a problem. We have prioritized ending violence and providing Afghans with what has eluded them for decades: the chance to live in peace and security.

There will be no peace unless military efforts are complemented by a robust and comprehensive outreach initiative. That is why President Karzai launched a reintegration and reconciliation initiative to ensure an honourable place in society for members of the armed opposition who are willing to surrender their arms, renounce violence, accept our constitution, return to normal life and embrace international human rights.

We recently established the High Peace Council to oversee the implementation of reintegration and reconciliation. The High Council is now operational and will meet regularly. In addition, we welcome the Security Council's review and updating of the Consolidated List created pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) as important for implementing our peace initiative. In this regard, we look forward to additional updates, as additional de-listing requests are made.

Terrorism poses a grave threat to the security and stability of our region and beyond. In this regard, we remain concerned with the continued presence in our region of safe havens and sanctuaries where terrorists receive recruitment, training and logistical support.

It is ever more evident that addressing the challenges facing Afghanistan and our region — including terrorism, extremism and the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs — will not be possible without meaningful cooperation at the regional level. For our part, Afghanistan remains fully committed to a sincere and effective dialogue with Pakistan and other regional countries in favour of the security and prosperity of our region.

Just recently, together with the Government of Pakistan, we signed the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement aimed at increasing bilateral trade and generating employment opportunities. Moreover, the signing of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and the conclusion of the feasibility study for the Central Asia-South Asia project for transfer of energy in the region are milestones for the development and prosperity of our region. We are confident that these projects will benefit security and stability in Afghanistan and the region and strengthen mutual trust and confidence.

Afghanistan is confident that by pursuing our comprehensive national agenda for security, development and governance, and by implementing our reintegration and reconciliation initiative, we will succeed in stabilizing Afghanistan and preventing the enemies of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan from regaining control of our country.

Nine and half years since the beginning of our partnership with the international community to defeat terrorism and achieve a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, we have come a long way. We attribute our achievements to the sacrifices of the Afghan people and the troops of our partner countries. A transition to increased Afghan responsibility and ownership will be our main priority over the coming years. We expect our international partners to remain by us with fortitude and commitment to ensure the successful conclusion of that transition.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan and I thank Special Representative Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his very comprehensive briefing. I also express my gratitude to the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) who have demonstrated their deep commitment to a very difficult mission.

The Government of Japan expresses its appreciation that the polling process for the election on 18 September to the Wolesi Jirga, or the Lower House of the National Assembly, has so far and generally been conducted as planned, though some polling stations

were inaccessible because of the security situation. We express our deep regret that some people became the victims of violent acts by anti-Government forces and strongly condemn such violence.

Japan dispatched an observer mission to Afghanistan for the election in addition to financial assistance for the United Nations Development Programme electoral assistance activities. We pay tribute to the Afghan authorities concerned, including the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which participated in the election process, and also the international community which supported it.

UNAMA played a major role in providing significant support to the Afghan Government and other related parties in, for example, its support of the IEC so that it could publish the list of polling centres one month before the election date. This was a great contribution to enhancing the transparency of the election. It is essential that the **electoral process** and investigation of complaints should proceed transparently until the final results of the election are certified.

We praise the Afghans' participation in the election, especially the high turnout of women and young people, in spite of the security risks, so that they themselves could decide their own future. Japan expects that reconciliation and development in Afghanistan will proceed smoothly with a new, democratically elected Parliament.

At the successful Kabul Conference in July this year, important progress was made towards the stabilization and reconciliation of Afghanistan with the Afghan leadership's presentation of their national priority programme, to which the international community committed to aligning its assistance. At the same time, as was reaffirmed in the Kabul Conference communiqué, it is essential that the Afghan Government make necessary reforms to strengthen its financial management capabilities and to reduce corruption.

Together with its partners in the international community, including the United Nations, Japan continues to assist the Afghan Government to improve this capacity. The coordination and monitoring of aid through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) is important for proper progress in the Kabul process. In this context, we appreciate the role of UNAMA as Joint President of the JCMB.

As we stated during the Kabul Conference, Japan has been actively providing assistance to Afghanistan, focusing on the three priority areas, namely, security, reintegration and development, given our determination to prevent Afghanistan from slipping back into a safe haven for terrorists.

As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/463), the security situation has continued to deteriorate in some parts of the country. Improving security in Afghanistan is an essential prerequisite for its reconstruction. In order to strengthen Afghan security forces so that Afghanistan can take over responsibility for its own security, Japan has been providing and will continue to provide assistance for the salaries and equipment of the Afghan National Police. We also recently decided to provide funding and instructors for the training in Turkey of Afghan police officers.

We appreciate the announcement by the Afghan Government of the Afghanistan peace and reintegration programme and of the launching of the peace and reintegration trust fund, to which Japan recently disbursed a $50 million contribution. Japan calls for the swift implementation of the Afghanistan peace and reintegration programme through the effective use of this trust fund.

As for development, Japan believes in the importance of showing results through **quick-impact** projects, while also maintaining a mid- to long-term perspective. We are providing assistance for human resource development, infrastructure, development and the rebuilding of the agricultural sector and rural communities.

Last week, in his address to the General Assembly, the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Naoto Kan, emphasized that Japan's assistance will be provided in such a way that the people of Afghanistan will be able to perceive tangible improvements in their livelihoods.

The Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr. Seiji Maehara, also explained Japan's assistance policies to Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassoul, present with us today. Japan's contribution has taken into consideration the priority areas of the Government, as I have mentioned, with approximately $5 billion to be disbursed over five years.

Stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the cooperation of those neighbouring countries that have close ties with it. In this context, Japan's has actively maintained a dialogue with Afghanistan's neighbours. In addition, it is our hope that stability in Afghanistan will be realized through close cooperation with a number of regional institutions. We welcome the participation of UNAMA in a series of meetings between Afghanistan and regional agencies.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Japan's continued support of UNAMA and, in particular, of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General, and reaffirm our commitment to assist in Afghanistan.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his comprehensive analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and the presentation of the report on the situation in this country (S/2010/463).

It is with heightened attention that we listened to the presentation of Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Events have taken place in the past few months which can be considered key in the history of Afghanistan. The international conference in Afghanistan in July launched the Kabul process and its main elements of international assistance to Afghan authorities in achieving independent control of issues of security and development and the gradual taking on of primary responsibilities in these fields.

The parliamentary elections of 18 September allowed the Afghan people to turn a new page in the strengthening of democratic governance in their country. Their conduct alone in such a complex military-political situation, despite intimidation and destabilizing actions by extremists, was a test of solidity of the Afghan Government and security structures.

At the same time, the military and political situation in the country remains tense, with a trend towards deterioration, including in previously calm northern regions. The report includes disturbing figures on significant increase of 69 per cent in the number of security incidents. The terrorist activity of the Taliban and Al-Qaida remains the main source of danger to the security of Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

There has been a recent increase in the number of incursions of groups of combatants from northern Afghanistan into neighbouring countries of Central Asia. Armed clashes in these countries, including Tajikistan, are extremely disturbing to States of the region, including Russia, that share what are in effect open borders with Afghanistan. We believe that the Afghan security sector and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) need to bolster their actions to counter the spread of instability in northern Afghanistan and across its borders.

ISAF will in the near future have to resolve complex issues in close cooperation with its Afghan partners. Its withdrawal without prejudice to the stability of Afghanistan and the entire region will be possible only after multilateral training of the national armed forces to make them able independently to fight terrorism, banditism and drug trafficking. A precondition for the termination of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan is its fulfilment of the Security Council's mandate.

A lengthy path remains to be traveled in Afghanistan to implement the comprehensive strategy for peace, security, reconstruction and integration. That will require suppressing the terrorist threat, training effective, combat-capable Afghan security structures, suppressing drug trafficking, achieving national reconciliation, creating effective mechanisms of State authority, restoring economic potential and developing democratic institutions. The international presence in Afghanistan must assist in resolving these issues.

A very pressing issue on the agenda is the intensification of international efforts to combat the Afghan drug threat. Drug trafficking, which has fused with terrorism, has become a threat to peace and security. It is clear that measures undertaken in this field are not yielding the expected results. The alternative crops programme is important, but crime will always be more profitable than legal trade. It is immoral to claim that, without drug crops, Afghan farmers will lose their livelihood. They are merely being exploited by drug traffickers.

Steps to combat the drug industry in Afghanistan must be comprehensive in nature and cover the entire chain, from eradicating drug crops, destroying drug infrastructure and marking precursors to arresting drug

lords and listing them on the Security Council sanctions lists. We await relevant proposals from the Government of Afghanistan and from those countries whose contingents are present in the country, as well as from the leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

What is unexplainable in the fight against the drug threat is the passivity of NATO, which for some years now has failed to respond to eminently logical proposals for forging cooperation in this field with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is carrying out active counter-narcotics activities. Indeed, the CSTO has just successfully concluded the latest phase of the counter-narcotics Operation Kanal, which was also linked to activities in stabilizing the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan.

In order to achieve peace and security in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, we support the Afghan leadership's policy of national reconciliation, and the reintegration into Afghan society of those participants in illegal armed groups who are not tainted by crimes and have renounced violence, ceased armed combat, recognized the Constitution of Afghanistan and broken with Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. We believe that former terrorists can be de-listed from the United Nations sanctions list only on an individual basis in line with established procedure.

We welcome the increased attention paid to the development of effective regional cooperation to promote assistance in solving Afghanistan's problems. A contribution to these collective efforts is being made by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), within whose framework an SCO Afghanistan contact group is active. This was also an item on the agenda of August's meeting of the Presidents of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan in Sochi. At its conclusion, a joint declaration backing the Kabul process and priority programmes in the field of security, State governance, development of the economy and infrastructure was adopted. The Russian Federation will continue to step up its cooperation with Afghanistan and a broad circle of international partners for the successful post-conflict restoration of Afghanistan.

We enable ISAF cargo and personnel to transit to Afghanistan through Russian territory. We are working with our partners on additional measures to equip Afghanistan's army and police. We are expanding our assistance in training personnel for Afghanistan security structures. We are contributing to th reconstruction of the economy and major infrastructu facilities in Afghanistan. This year, the Russia Federation wrote off the Islamic Republic Afghanistan's remaining debt of $891 million. Th total amount of debt forgiven is $12 billion. This is a absolute record among Afghanistan's donors. W continue to provide humanitarian assistance Afghanistan. As part of our regular contribution to th World Food Programme, we have started supplyin $5 million worth of wheat flour.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I joi my colleagues in thanking the Secretary-General fo his report (S/2010/463) and Special Representativ Staffan de Mistura for his briefing, including th detailed update on the parliamentary elections. I offer warm welcome to Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister fo Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and thank him for h encouraging remarks. I would also like to acknowledg the presence of Mark Sedwill, NATO's Senior Civilia Representative in Afghanistan, in the Council Chambe this morning.

Much has happened since the Council debate Afghanistan three months ago (see S/PV.6351). Man challenges remain, but progress is being made Crucially, this progress is increasingly directed an driven by the Government of Afghanistan and othe Afghan authorities. The United Kingdom is committe to working with them and with the United Nations an the wider international community towards the goal o a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General's report and the briefin we just heard highlight in particular the scale o political progress. The recent parliamentary election the first run by Afghans since the 1960s, are welcom evidence of the growing capacity of the Afgha authorities. They successfully overcame major securit and logistical obstacles with impressive levels o support from the United Nations Assistance Mission i Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nation Development Programme. I am sure that my Securit Council colleagues would agree that those Afghan who acted as officials, who stood as candidates an who exercised their right to vote showed great courag and fortitude. Their participation sent a strong messag to those who wanted to deny the Afghan people a vote

We must now wait patiently for the completion of the counting and adjudication processes. It is for the Afghan authorities to investigate any reports of irregularities in accordance with Afghan law, through the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission.

Looking ahead, the United Kingdom welcomes the focus of the Afghan authorities and UNAMA on longer-term electoral reform, as set out in the London and Kabul communiqués. We agree with the Secretary-General's report that this reform process should start without delay.

The United Kingdom supported the findings of the Consultative Peace Jirga in June, as well as President Karzai's endorsement of the Afghan peace and reintegration programme. Both were important steps in promoting wider reconciliation. Yesterday's establishment of the High Peace Council was a further positive development. The appointment of a head of the Council and confirmation of its membership are priorities.

The Kabul Conference in July was further important evidence of increased Afghan leadership and commitment. The United Kingdom echoes the Secretary-General's congratulations to the Government of Afghanistan on holding such a successful high-level event in difficult circumstances. The Kabul process now provides a detailed road map for the future. We must all focus on implementing the commitments and supporting the Afghan Government to maintain momentum for progress and reform, including in the important battle against corruption.

As the Secretary-General reports, the security situation remains serious. The increase in insurgent activity and the complexity of their attacks continue to be of concern. The rise in the number of incidents involving improvised explosive devices and the near doubling of assassinations, executions and kidnappings by insurgents threaten Afghans civilians as well as international and Afghan officials and forces. As a result, there continue to be many civilian casualties, although it is important to note that the Secretary-General indicates in his report that just 12 per cent of civilian deaths are due to action by pro-Government forces — a fall of some 64 per cent as compared to the same period in 2009, which is an encouraging trend.

Against that background, building the capacity of Afghan National Security Forces is essential to improving security across Afghanistan, not least now that a broad timetable for security transition has been set. The recruitment and training of the Afghan National Army and National Police is ahead of schedule. There are now portions of the country that experience relatively few security incidents. The International Security Assistance Force will continue to work with Afghan forces to improve their capability across the country.

I welcome the Government of Afghanistan's continued dialogue and exchange with its neighbours and the wider region. As the Secretary-General notes, bilateral talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan have delivered concrete plans for cooperation. The ratification of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement is the next important step for both countries to benefit from the increased links.

Finally, the United Kingdom continues to support the work of UNAMA and of Special Representative De Mistura. Over the coming months, we look forward, first, to UNAMA continuing to promote greater aid coherence and effectiveness. For our part, the United Kingdom is intensifying and reinvigorating our development efforts in line with the Afghan Government's own priorities. This includes a commitment of a 40 per cent increase in development aid.

Secondly, we look forward to UNAMA taking on board the lessons learned from the recent and past elections and to working earnestly with the Government of Afghanistan on longer-term electoral reform in line with the commitments made in London and Kabul.

Finally, we look forward to UNAMA supporting political outreach, within Afghanistan and regionally, in support of the Kabul process.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would of course like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the presentation of the report (S/2010/463) and the briefing on the situation in Afghanistan they have just made.

The representative of the European Union will shortly make a statement, with which France associates itself.

Two important events this summer have had a significant impact on the political situation in Afghanistan that should give us a degree of optimism.

The first and most recent event was the holding of legislative elections on 18 September. It is a cause for satisfaction that, despite their threats and violence, the Taliban failed to prevent 2,500 candidates from campaigning and more than 4 million Afghans from voting. That is the first success, and it is an Afghan success. However, the task is not yet finished. The Electoral Complaints Commission should impartially and professionally address the fraud complaints that have been brought to it. The official announcement of results, scheduled for 30 October, must not be delayed.

The second event was the holding of the Kabul Conference on 20 July, under the co-chairmanship of the United Nations and the Afghan Government, which aimed to establish another milestone in Afghanistan's transition to full exercise of its sovereign authority, which began at the London Conference last January. That is why our leaders so strongly emphasized that the Conference, which brought together 76 delegations from throughout the world, had to be held in Kabul and nowhere else. The meeting made it possible to reaffirm the support of the international community for the peace, reconciliation and reintegration programme that President Karzai launched on 29 June.

That process should be carried out by Afghans themselves. However, the international community cannot just stand on the sidelines. Our support must remain undiminished, so long as certain conditions are respected: the rejection of violence, the absence of links to international terrorism, and respect for the Constitution, human rights and the rights of women.

The evolution of the composition of the list of persons and entities linked with Al-Qaida and the Taliban, established by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), has concretely spelled out the inter-Afghan reconciliation process. We are prepared to pursue dialogue with Afghan officials with a view to considering the eventual removal of the Taliban from the list if they meet the political criteria of reconciliation.

The Kabul Conference also made it possible to acknowledge the work done by Afghans and NATO for a gradual transfer of responsibility for security in various provinces and districts. Those efforts must continue and must lead to the gradual assumption by Afghans of responsibility for their own security, and they should be accompanied by our ongoing support to train and equip Afghan security forces. That is the best way to demonstrate to Afghans and to public opinion in our own countries that progress is being made. However, we must send out a clear message that transition does not mean departure, but an increasing handover of responsibilities to Afghan security forces with the assistance of the international community. Improving governance and combating corruption are key elements of the contract proposed at Kabul between the international community and the Afghan State.

The Taliban, who are responsible for the overwhelming majority of civilian casualties, as my British colleague has just emphasized, are continuing their attacks and extortion and are giving no sign of a desire to engage in dialogue. The Afghan people and the members of the international community have paid the price. In spite of the efforts by the Government of Pakistan, the havens that the Afghan Taliban continue to use there remain a matter of concern.

It is in that context that we need the legitimacy, impartiality and expertise of the United Nations in Afghanistan more than ever before. France unreservedly supports the work of Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. We pay tribute to all the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who have carried out their duties under difficult conditions.

We support the Special Representative's priorities under his 3+1 approach, which is in line with the mandate provided in resolution 1917 (2010). That re-centering is now beginning to produce results.

First, I wish to refer to the elections again in order to commend the United Nations for its assistance in the preparations for the poll. I should also like to thank Mr. De Mistura for his personal involvement at decisive points during the electoral process. That is precisely the role of the Special Representative. He has our full support.

Secondly, support for an inter-Afghan and regional political reconciliation process will likely be the most difficult and important issue to be dealt with in the coming months. We should further work to ensure that the United Nations plays a decisive role. In that regard, we are prepared to consider modalities for further involvement by UNAMA, which should remain

President Karzai's sole interlocutor on this issue. However, the key to the stability of Afghanistan is also a regional matter, and the United Nations, by virtue of its impartiality, is well situated to bring together all regional stakeholders around a common goal.

Lastly, the Special Representative and UNAMA should continue to work on bringing coherence to international assistance, along with the Afghan Government and the Special Representative of the International Security Assistance Force, with the aim of moving towards the goal of aligning 80 per cent of international assistance with national priority programmes.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating my country's commitment to Afghans in their struggle to establish a country where the rule of law, democratic and prosperous, prevails, while ensuring that their territory does not once again serve as a launching pad for international terrorism. We shall continue to be part of collective efforts by focusing our military and civilian forces in Kapisa Province and the Surobi district.

As the President of the French Republic has often affirmed, France will continue to be engaged as long as necessary — and as long as the Afghans wish us to be.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): Let me also thank Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his briefing today and for his continued strong leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I am also pleased to welcome Foreign Minister Rassoul; we thank him for his leadership and for his statement.

The staff of UNAMA has the full support of the United States in their challenging and important work in assisting the Afghan people. We applaud them again for their service and sacrifice.

Our goal in Afghanistan remains unchanged: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaida and to prevent its return. More international forces are focused on reversing the Taliban's momentum and providing security for the Afghan people. We are working in partnership with the Afghan security forces, so that Afghans themselves can assume more and more responsibility for their country's security. The United States is committed to ensuring that this transition to Afghan-led responsibility for security is conditions-based and irreversible and managed through a process agreed to by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community at the Kabul Conference.

Some parts of Afghanistan are nearly ready for transition now; others will require more time and effort on all of our parts. We are providing civilian experts and mentors for the police and the army, which are critical to ensuring that the transition occurs smoothly. Based upon Afghanistan's transition plan, we will help Afghanistan meet its goal of taking the lead on security by 2014.

This transition does not at all lessen our commitment to the Afghan people. The United States will continue to provide assistance to help build the capacities of Afghan institutions to withstand and reduce the threat posed by extremism. We are also helping to build up the Afghan institutional capacity to delivery high-impact economic assistance, especially in the agricultural sector, to create jobs, improve governance, fight narcotics and draw insurgents off the battlefield. Our support is focused, at the national level, on Afghan ministries that can most directly affect service delivery, particularly in the geographic heart of the insurgency: the south and the east. We are also adapting our programmes to account for local realities and broadening our support at the provincial and district levels to enhance the visibility, effectiveness and accountability of the institutions that can improve Afghan lives the most.

When representatives of more than 70 Governments and international organizations gathered in Kabul in July, we made clear our lasting commitment to our partnership with Afghanistan. The Kabul Conference launched an ambitious process to chart a vision for Afghanistan's future. The Kabul process reflects a commitment to accountability, including clear benchmarks and milestones, and the United States fully supports the priorities and goals identified by the Afghan Government. We welcome, as well, UNAMA's commitment to aligning aid behind the Government of Afghanistan's priorities and UNAMA's support for the Government's push for greater aid coherence and effectiveness. We look forward to seeing the United Nations integrated strategic framework, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/463), and its definition of priority areas for United Nations engagement in support of Afghanistan's transition.

Let me now turn to the key role that the Security Council's Al-Qaida/Taliban sanctions Committee — the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) — can play in fostering stability in Afghanistan. We commend the 1267 Committee for its recent de-listing of 10 Taliban individuals who are either deceased or reconciled, as well as the Committee's designation of three individuals who possess strong links to the Taliban. We continue to believe that individuals who have ceased violence against the Afghan State, cut ties to Al-Qaida and accepted the Afghan Constitution should be considered reconciled and removed from the 1267 sanctions list. We must ensure that the 1267 list keeps pace with the evolving threat, and we encourage the Government of Afghanistan and all Member States to provide updates to the 1267 Committee, as well as well-documented listing and de-listing requests, to ensure the list's accuracy. Recent improvements to the Committee's listing and de-listing procedures will make the 1267 regime a stronger, more credible tool in our overall efforts to combat terrorism and bolster peace and security in Afghanistan.

Finally, let me also comment on the elections just concluded in Afghanistan. These elections, held under extremely difficult circumstances, were the first parliamentary elections to be run entirely by Afghan institutions since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The Secretary-General's report and the briefing we have just heard describe the extensive electoral preparations by the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission and the Afghan Electoral Complaints Commission, and the important support provided by the United Nations. These preparations resulted in a historic step for the Afghan people. We applaud the courage, resolve and patriotism of those who voted, male and female, despite Taliban threats, intimidation and violence. These elections would not have been possible without the Afghan National Security Forces, which bravely protected the Afghan people from the foes of the democratic process. We condemn the Taliban's attacks on members of the security forces and on innocent civilians seeking to do nothing more than cast their democratic ballots. On behalf of the United States, let me pass on my profound sympathies to those who were injured and my deepest condolences to the families of those who were killed.

As Special Representative De Mistura said, it will be some time before the results of these elections are finalized. Independent Afghan electoral institutions will now count the votes, respond to complaints and allegations of fraud and ultimately announce results that reflect the will of the Afghan people. The United States supports this Afghan-led process. These elections must be credible and transparent in the eyes of the Afghan people, who will be the ultimate judge of their success. We support UNAMA's plans to remain closely engaged with Afghan institutions as they count and tabulate results over the next few weeks.

We must not lose sight of the need for long-term electoral reform. This must remain an important priority, and my Government supports UNAMA's plans to focus on this area after the election as well.

These elections are but a single but important step towards a stronger, more stable Afghanistan. The United States remains steadfastly committed to helping Afghanistan achieve the peaceful and prosperous future that the people of Afghanistan so deserve.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his informative briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, and I thank him for his statement.

We once again note with concern that the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate in spite of the efforts of the international community. This insecurity remains a major obstacle to efforts to achieve peace and stability in the country. If not checked, this insecurity will continue to overshadow the progress achieved by the Government and the people of Afghanistan so far.

There is a need to sustain the momentum in the Afghan-led peace and reintegration efforts, which should be supported by the international community. The holding of the Kabul Conference on 20 July was a significant political development in Afghanistan. The Conference proved that there is a shared interest by the international community in helping the Afghan Government and people overcome the challenges of national development.

We welcome the Conference outcome, and in particular the key commitments made by both the Afghan Government and the international community.

We look forward to the finalization of the framework of the national priority programmes presented by the Afghan Government. The international community should align its development assistance behind the national priority programmes, whose timely implementation will be essential to maintain the momentum of the Kabul process.

Despite Taliban threats and attacks aimed at disrupting the parliamentary elections that were held on 18 September, it is encouraging to note the significant increase in the participation of Afghan women.

Regionally owned initiatives stand the best chance of success in addressing concerns that cut across national borders. We encourage the Afghan Government's continued cooperation with neighboring countries based on the common desire to increase joint efforts in responding to security concerns and bolster economic cooperation in the region. The conclusion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement in July was a significant development that will facilitate the realization of the full economic potential of those two countries.

The development challenges that Afghanistan faces require sustained, long-term support from the international community. A well coordinated and well resourced civilian effort is critical to overcoming these challenges. In this regard, we commend UNAMA for its continued role in facilitating a coherent Afghan-led agenda in security, governance and development. We believe that this role is critical for the success of the Kabul process, through which Afghans will assume full leadership and full ownership.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, I should like to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2010/463), as well as to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, for his valuable briefing. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for his valuable contribution to today's debate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina commends the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) for their committed efforts in organizing inclusive, transparent and credible elections despite the difficult security environment and logistical challenges. We encourage the ECC to continue investigating complaints in a fully independent manner in order to eliminate any assumption of fraud. Furthermore, we note the important role of the Afghan Security Forces in ensuring a safe environment for the electorate. However, we are saddened to learn that, despite their efforts, human casualties have been reported from attacks on polling stations. While welcoming the participation of the 397 women candidates, we firmly condemn the intimidation of and violence against certain female candidates and their campaign workers.

We welcomed the holding of the Kabul Conference on 20 July, co-chaired by the Afghan Government and the United Nations. That Conference was of critical importance for advancing the Kabul process, which emphasizes the need for Afghan ownership in the fields of security, governance and social development as a necessary precondition for a sustainable Afghanistan. In this light, we fully support the designed strategy for a transfer of lead responsibility for security matters on a province-by-province basis.

The Afghan peace and reintegration programme represents a promising way forward towards the establishment of a peaceful security environment. We command the creation of its committees and we encourage the efforts of Special Representative De Mistura to assure broad representation of religious, ethnic and civil society groups, including women, in the High Peace Council of the programme.

With respect to the Consolidated List of individuals and entities subject to sanction measures, we support the de-listing of individuals and entities in accordance with the guidelines of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to the resolution 1267 (1999), which provide clear procedures for placing individuals and entities on the consolidated list and for removing them. At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates the importance of ending impunity and bringing all alleged perpetrators of crimes to justice. That is an important condition for building sustainable peace and reconciliation of the society.

Bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation are essential to addressing security concerns and increasing economic cooperation, thereby enhancing peaceful relations. In this respect, we welcome and encourage the ongoing bilateral talks

between the Afghan and Pakistani Governments as well as President Karzai's participation in the fourth trilateral summit meeting, held in Tehran on 5 August, and the meeting in Sochi, Russia, on 18 August.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains particularly concerned about the rising human cost of the ongoing conflict. The findings of the report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Afghanistan, released by UNAMA, are in fact extremely alarming. We learn with the deepest concern that casualties among Afghan children and women have substantially increased over the past year. Therefore, we demand that effective measures to protect Afghan civilians are urgently given high priority. Needless to say, we give full support to initiatives aimed at fostering the observance of human rights.

We are also deeply concerned about increasing drug dependence among the Afghan population and about the findings presented in the Afghanistan Drug Use Survey 2009. We call upon all relevant governmental, international and civil society actors to increase their efforts in the area of drug prevention and dependence treatment as an important component of health care and development programmes.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina congratulates UNAMA staff and Special Representative De Mistura on their tireless work and dedication. We also express our full support for the establishment of a support office and a disaster recovery and business continuity centre and the planned upgrading of existing offices, which will strengthen the Mission's activities in support of the Afghan peace process and of improvement of the everyday lives of the Afghan people.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): I too would like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Afghanistan, including the recently concluded parliamentary elections. I should also like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Zaimal Rassoul to the Council's meeting today. I will limit my intervention to issues of political developments, elections, security, economic development and the regional dimension.

We congratulate the Government and the people of Afghanistan on the successful holding of the parliamentary elections on 18 September 2010. With many candidates competing for many parliamentary seats, the challenges of conducting the parliamentary elections in the face of threats of violence from diehard insurgents were quite daunting. Nigeria therefore salutes the courage and resilience of the Afghan people for defying the odds and exercising their rights, noting that they demonstrated their determination to consolidate the country's fledgling democracy with a large turnout during the voting in spite of threats and intimidation. The increased participation of women, especially those seeking elected office, is another demonstration of the continued commitment to democracy.

We commend the Independent Electoral Commission for managing and facilitating the electoral process. We also commend UNAMA for providing the training and the technical and logistical support needed for the election.

As we await the full and final outcome of the voting, the challenge facing Afghanistan's political leaders is to ensure that the efforts and sacrifices of the people are not wasted. The results should therefore reflect the will of the people. In this regard, we urge that all the complaints filed with the Electoral Complaints Commission be thoroughly investigated. The partial recount of votes from seven of the country's 34 provinces, ordered only yesterday, should also be painstakingly conducted. We urge all aggrieved parties to act with caution and seek recourse to legal channels for redress. The Electoral Complaints Commission is encouraged to apply lessons learned from previous elections and to resolve all irregularities and complaints in a timely manner and in accordance with the law.

Resolving the political impasse over the remaining nominations to the Cabinet, as agreed at the Peace Jirga, is equally important to the consolidation of Afghanistan's democratic process. We urge both the legislative and the executive branches to act expeditiously to resolve the impasse.

To support reconciliation and a political settlement, there should be sustained negotiations and dialogue between the parties. We therefore hope that the Government's appointment, on Tuesday, 28 September, of the members of the High Peace Council — comprising warlords, village elders and women — will give impetus to the reconciliation process in the country.

Nigeria shares the Secretary-General's concern about the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. The more than 300 cases of attacks in the period leading up to and during the elections confirmed the precarious state of security in the country. Polling centres were blown up in Kunar, Khost and Kandahar, and rocket attacks were launched against polling centres in populated areas of Nangarhar and Kunar, killing several civilians. Only yesterday, Afghanistan's Interior Ministry confirmed a suicide attack that killed Mr. Mohammad Kazim Allahyar, Deputy Governor of Ghazni province, and five others in a direct attack on his vehicle. These security challenges call for the continuous strengthening of the capacity and state of readiness of the Government as it prepares to assume full law enforcement responsibilities in the country by 2014.

Nigeria reiterates its support for the Government's action plan, and urges the international community to align its resources and activities in support of the programme and priorities contained in the plan. The development of infrastructure should be accorded priority, as it will stimulate employment and help the Afghan Government to create a viable and self-sustaining economy that is less dependent on foreign aid. The international community has the responsibility to support the Government's follow-through on its renewed commitment to the dual track of security and effective accountability to the people, made at the Kabul Conference. The Government should take concrete steps to ensure good governance, tackle corruption, improve accountability, adhere to the rule of law, and reform the justice system.

The increasing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours on cross-border crime, illicit drug trafficking, arms smuggling and human trafficking demonstrates the importance of the regional dimension in confronting the challenges facing the country. In this connection, we commend the setting-up of the high-level Core Group to create the framework for cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank. We welcome UNAMA's participation in these efforts.

In conclusion, Nigeria expresses its appreciation to the staff and personnel of UNAMA for their dedication, and to Special Representative De Mistura for his commitment to the peace efforts in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I thank Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and able leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also welcome the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and thank him for his remarks.

Today, I would like to extend special congratulations to the Afghan people, who once again defied terrorist threats to vote in the Wolesi Jirga elections on 18 September. The very holding of the elections and the improvements made in their organization are important developments. The impressive number of candidates and the vibrant campaigning testified to the determination of the Afghan people to consolidate democratic governance.

We are concerned, however, about reports of violence and intimidation that prevented polling stations from opening and voters from participating. Brazil condemns these acts, as well as the derogatory remarks made against women candidates. Those responsible must be brought to justice without delay.

Regarding the next steps in the electoral process, the Independent Electoral Commission, the Electoral Complaints Commission and its provincial offices must be allowed to carry out their duties in conformity with Afghan legislation and free from interference.

Unfortunately, the violence displayed during the elections reflected rising insecurity in the country. We note with great concern that 2010 has already become the most violent in Afghanistan since the current military operations began. We are particularly saddened by the toll on civilians. The 55-per cent increase in overall child casualties is extremely disturbing. Brazil commends the efforts of the pro-Government forces to reduce civilian casualties, which now stand at 12 per cent of the total figure.

However, more must be done, especially regarding casualties from escalation-of-force incidents, which experienced a very significant increase. Sustained progress in the military operations and in the transition to greater Afghan responsibility for security is an important element of any strategy to reverse the current trends. A conditions-based process of the Afghanization of security is at the core of the commitments made at the London and Kabul Conferences. We were therefore pleased to learn that progress is being made in recruiting and training

Afghan security personnel and in strengthening the ethnic and regional balance and human rights preparation of troops and police.

Afghan forces must be provided with the enablers and equipment necessary to perform their functions in a very challenging environment. Continuously enhancing Afghanistan's ownership of its security also requires upholding Afghan sovereignty and regulatory powers over private military and security companies operating on Afghan soil.

Continued progress is key to other aspects of the Kabul progress, especially reconciliation and reintegration, the regional dimension and the delivery of governance and development to the Afghan people. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the High Peace Council and note the recent appointment of its members, including several women, by President Karzai. Representation of Afghans from all regions and ethnic backgrounds and women's and civil society organizations is an important safeguard to ensure that the reconciliation process does not come at the cost of the rights recently reclaimed.

The efforts to strengthen the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and to align its standing committees more closely to the clusters of the Afghan National Development Strategy are other important steps in moving the Kabul process forward, especially on aid coherence. In this regard, my delegation would appreciate it if further information could be provided in future reports on the execution of the Afghan national priority programmes, as well as on the implementation by the donor community of the London and Kabul commitments on budget aid and the realignment of off-budget aid.

Brazil fully concurs with the Secretary-General's assessment that the Kabul process can be successful only if it delivers at the local level countrywide. We commend UNAMA's efforts to support the alignment of sub-national programmes and work plans with the national priority programmes, as well as to build capacity at the provincial and district levels. Making sub-national administrations more representative of local realities and better able to provide governance and development is key to building stability in Afghanistan.

Developing agriculture is of the utmost importance in helping to lay the foundations for both prosperity and peace in Afghanistan. The important role of agriculture in exterminating or reducing poppy crops and drug trafficking, for example, cannot be overstated.

Brazil is committed to strengthening its contribution to the stability and development of Afghanistan. The recent decision of my Government to open a resident embassy in Kabul was a practical demonstration thereof. But we are not waiting for it to happen before we step up our cooperation with Afghanistan. Just yesterday, a technical mission led by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency left Afghanistan after extensive meetings to identify areas for technical cooperation in agriculture, mining and the cutting and polishing of gemstones. The mission was organized in close consultations with the Afghan Government in order to ensure that our cooperation is fully consistent with Afghan priorities.

Both in the framework of international forums, in particular the Security Council, and through an enhanced presence in Kabul and a renewed impetus in our bilateral relationship, Brazil stands ready to work together with the Afghan people and its Government towards a brighter future.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): I, too, would first like to thank Special Representative De Mistura for his informative briefing and for his very challenging work at the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also welcome Foreign Minister Rassoul to the Security Council. We listened with great interest to and are grateful for his important contribution to the debate today.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I would like to make the following points.

We congratulate the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA on the very successful preparations for and organization of the Kabul Conference two months ago. This historic event was an important signal that Afghanistan is willing and able to take responsibility for its security and development.

The timely implementation of the commitments made both by the Afghan Government and the international community is key. We welcome the first concrete steps taken by the Afghan Government. Maximum ownership and empowerment of the Afghan people in the political and security sectors will be

critical to the country's long-term stability. The Kabul process can succeed only if it includes all segments of Afghan society. We welcome UNAMA's efforts to promote the participation of civil society, including women's groups, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in the Kabul process and encourage it to further pursue these efforts.

We strongly believe that the Kabul process must also yield a peace dividend for the Afghan people. The improvement of livelihoods and creation of sustainable income opportunities will help to contain the influence of extremist groups. It is important to enhance opportunities and to profit from the valuable role of Afghan women and girls. We also need to address the enormous increase in criminal incidents in Afghanistan. Law enforcement authorities and all those who can redress this emerging challenge to civilians have to be supported.

The holding of parliamentary elections was another important milestone in the democratic process of State-building. While it may be too early for a comprehensive assessment, we wish to commend the Independent Electoral Commission and UNAMA on tangible improvements made in the preparation of the elections. These polls were conducted under truly challenging conditions, and the millions of Afghan citizens who went to the polls in defiance of threats and intimidation by the Taliban deserve our full respect. It was especially pleasing to see the great participation of young Afghans. We now expect the Afghan electoral bodies to address fully and in an impartial and transparent manner all reports of irregularities and complaints that have been filed. Beyond that, comprehensive and long-term electoral reform will evidently also be necessary.

We appreciate the steps taken by the Afghan Government to advance a political solution by way of launching and implementing the peace and reconciliation programme. At the same time, all efforts must be undertaken to ensure that those who are already bearing the brunt of the ongoing conflict will not be further victimized and that human rights, and especially women's and children's rights, are not compromised in the reconciliation process.

We thank the Special Representative for his advocacy for broad representation of religious and ethnic communities and the female population in the implementation of the programme. We strongly encourage UNAMA to continue to keep the Council informed of further developments, including with a view to the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009).

During the recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan, the Afghan authorities and the public showed considerable interest in the review of the consolidated list of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban, which I have the honour to chair. We are pleased that, meanwhile, this process has been concluded, allowing for a substantial update of the list. At the same time, the consolidated list remains a living document. We therefore need to continue to ensure that the list reflects the actual threat, and that means that entries that are no longer relevant must be removed and new threats must be reflected in the appropriate new entries. This will evidently require continued close cooperation between the Committee and the Afghan authorities, and I will do my best to promote such cooperation for the remainder of my mandate as Chair of the 1267 Committee.

The recent report of UNAMA on the protection of civilians reveals the escalating human cost of the conflict. The first six months of this year have seen a significant rise in civilian casualties. Women and, above all, child casualties have dramatically increased compared to last year. Anti-government elements — and I wish to underline this — were responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths and injuries. Their means of warfare — the extensive use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, the use of civilians as human shields, the recruitment of children and the assassination campaigns directed against their own fellow citizens — violate the most basic principles of international humanitarian law. It will be crucial to hold the perpetrators of these and past crimes accountable. Effective forms of assistance for victims need to be provided.

On the other hand, the significant drop in the number of civilian casualties caused by pro-Government forces is a welcome development. We also welcome the efforts of the Afghan Government to address the situation of children affected by the armed conflict, in particular the launch of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the Government's intention to develop an action plan to prevent the recruitment of children.

Finally, we wish to commend the efforts of the Special Representative in support of regional initiatives and cooperation in order to bring all regional actors together around the common goal of achieving stability, prosperity and lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

China congratulates Afghanistan on the successful holding of parliamentary elections on 18 September. This was a major event in Afghan political life and constitutes an important step towards achieving an Afghanistan run by Afghans and towards peaceful reconstruction. We highly appreciate the preparatory work that the Afghan Government carried out in a very difficult and complex situation, and we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its support and assistance to the country. We hope that, through these elections, the Afghan people will further bolster consensus with a view to the early achievement of reconciliation, peace and development.

The process of peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan is now at a critical transitional stage fraught with many challenges. In July, the Kabul Conference on Afghanistan was successfully held. That international Conference — the very first held in Afghanistan — was significant: it was an important step in the Kabul process and enriched and enhanced the partnership between Afghanistan and its international partners to advance the country's reconstruction process. In its next phase, the work of the Security Council and the international community must focus on implementing the communiqué adopted at the international Kabul Conference on Afghanistan.

Peace, stability and development in Afghanistan require ownership and leadership by the Government and the people of that country. We support the Afghan Government's efforts to build its capacity to exercise control throughout its territory. In order to achieve fresh progress, work should continue in a balanced manner in the spheres of economic development, safety and security, national reconciliation, governance, the rule of law and combating drug trafficking. We encourage the Government and the people also to take effective measures to step up economic development and improve living standards. We support the Afghan peace and reintegration programme formulated by the Government, and we hope that the Government will listen to the views of its people and their political parties so that the political basis for reconciliation can be broadened.

Peace, stability and development in Afghanistan also require the sustained engagement and support of the international community, which should, on the basis of respect for the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, honour its assistance commitments to Afghanistan. Such assistance should be in line with Afghanistan's national development strategy and should respect the priorities identified by the country itself. We should all continue to help the Afghan Government to enhance its national security capacity and to accelerate the building of the police and security forces. China supports a continued central coordinating role for the United Nations and UNAMA in facilitating the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan.

China is very concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the country and about the increasing number of security incidents. We are troubled by the increase in casualties among innocent civilians. In our view, the transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan Government must be based on ensuring the country's security and stability. We hope that UNAMA will do more to protect civilians, within its mandate.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ambassador Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing and for his commitment to peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also thank Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, to whose statement we listened attentively.

The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/463), which reflects a 69 per cent increase in security incidents compared to last year, saps the confidence of the civilian population in their institutions and undermines the efforts of the international community and the United Nations on the ground. The high human, material and political costs

borne by Afghanistan and the international presence on a daily basis indicate the imperative need to complement military action with genuine, inclusive, regionally-centred dialogue to counteract the current cycle of violence.

The political process, supported by military efforts, should always be moving in the same direction under Afghan leadership and with the necessary international support. Here, we welcome President Karzai's announcement on the establishment of a peace commission for dialogue with the Taliban.

In the light of the upcoming reduction in United States forces in the country, the joint transition plan of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan Government is of fundamental importance. UNAMA monitoring of that plan with a view to bolstering Government leadership and national ownership throughout the country should faithfully indicate whether the Government has the human, political and financial resources necessary to fully resume its security responsibilities. The international community should bear in mind that, although security and stability are Afghanistan's most urgent need, a halt to or reduction in military activity will not in itself guarantee security.

In the light of the need to strengthen political dialogue and overall planning in Afghanistan, we hail the holding of the Kabul Conference on 20 July. It lends momentum to a process whereby Afghans will gradually be able to resume responsibility for their own security, governance and economic and social development. We welcome the Government's actions to advance in this process; it has begun to provide details on the 23 national priority programmes introduced at the Kabul Conference with the aim of identifying beneficiaries for the short and medium term. We consider that the chances of success for this process will be enhanced by carrying it out in line with an inclusive vision encompassing women and members of ethnic and religious minorities.

We view as positive the visit to Afghanistan by the Monitoring Team operating under the direction of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1267 (1999), which is tasked with reviewing the consolidated list, which includes individuals subject to sanctions, bearing in mind that the ongoing de-listing process is in accordance with the Afghan Government's peace and reintegration programme, which has the support of the Council.

The work of Ambassador De Mistura, in his capacity as Co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, continues to be of particularly great value in ensuring that commitments undertaken at the London and Kabul Conferences are met and facilitating the implementation of Afghan reconciliation programmes.

With respect to the rule of law, we reaffirm that the sine qua non for building sustainable peace in Afghanistan is the implementation of justice and accountability processes. This includes the fight against corruption and organized crime, especially illegal drug trafficking.

My delegation reiterates its profound concern over the number of children who have been killed or injured in acts of violence related to the conflict, which has increased by 55 per cent since 2009. This, added to the sexual violence perpetrated against children in the country, remains a generalized phenomenon. We call on all parties to meet their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular resolution 1882 (2009).

With regard to the parliamentary elections held on 18 September, we commend all the efforts of the Government and the support of UNAMA and the international community in convening them. We strongly condemn the terrorist activities and violence perpetrated by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other anti-Government elements, which sought to destabilize the process and limited citizens' ability to vote in some parts of the country. We are likewise concerned by reports of irregularities during the elections. We believe it critical for the Electoral Complaints Commission to look carefully at the complaints received, so that the final results to be issued by the Independent Electoral Commission in late October enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the elections. This commendable effort should undoubtedly work to the benefit of Afghan democracy and stability in the country and the region.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by conveying my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on international peace and security (S/2010/463). I would also like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the

Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his efforts and his exhaustive briefing. I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and thank him for his important statement.

I would like to make the following comments. First, the parliamentary elections of 18 September were at the very centre of our concerns, as they are a key element of democracy. They were a test of the Afghan electoral institutions and the entire international community. We welcome the logistical and technical steps that were taken to guarantee the successful conduct of the elections in a transparent and free manner and to avoid or overcome the shortcomings and gaps in the 2009 presidential election. Furthermore, the encouraging participation rate of candidates and voters alike — and of women in particular — in these very difficult conditions demonstrated the extent to which Afghan society is wedded to the democratic process.

However, the security situation remains a major stumbling block, whether in terms of threats against and even assassinations of candidates and electoral staff, or of situations where a number of voters were not allowed to exercise their right to vote. Moreover, irregularities and fraud are very serious challenges no less important than security. That is why the role of the Electoral Complaints Commission was essential in limiting the negative fallout of these aspects of the elections, in which we had a number of incidents.

Secondly, certain that a political solution is the appropriate way to end the crisis in Afghanistan and to ensure that all main stakeholders without exception participate in Government, and realizing that partial solutions are not viable, we support the reconciliation and reintegration process and affirm the need to implement the decisions of the 20 July Kabul Conference in a timely way. That process must involve every stratum of society throughout the country.

The Conference was a twofold commitment. On the one hand, it reflected the commitment of the Government to improving the security situation and governance, promoting economic and social development, and fighting drug trafficking to the benefit of the people. On the other hand, it also demonstrated the commitment of the international community to backing the national Afghan Government, bringing into play various resources and means to ensure that the Government regains complete control of its territory, and reaffirming our condemnation of terrorist activities. We note with alarm that the security situation has not improved in many regions around the country. The overall number of security-related incidents has clearly grown in comparison to the same period last year; the number of civilian deaths, including among women and children, is still increasing.

Thirdly, we reaffirm the need to cooperate at the regional level and to support neighbouring countries, given the relationship of the security situation, including the economy, to the fight against drug trafficking, which is a basic source of financing for terrorism. It is clear that peace in Afghanistan will further the interests of all countries of the region.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, in my turn, to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, whom it is my pleasure to see and hear again as he outlines the situation in Afghanistan. Having recently seen him at work on the ground, I appreciate the relevance of his views and analysis. I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and thank him for his statement.

Like those who have taken the floor before me, I welcome the successful holding of parliamentary elections on 18 September. The holding of the elections, despite serious terrorist threats, was ample proof of the Afghan people's courage and determination to turn a dark page in their history and to live within an organized society in a climate of peace. We deplore, however, that alongside this commitment of the Afghan people and Government to working towards peace, the insurgents continue to find new ways to create havoc, harassing the Afghan security forces, international forces and the civilian population throughout the country.

However, the various international conferences and forums that have been held point to an improvement in the situation in Afghanistan. The Government has, in fact, made praiseworthy efforts in the areas of good governance, human rights and the rule of law. Moreover, they have done everything in their power to promote national reconciliation, particularly by extending a hand to marginalized

groups willing to engage in dialogue and become part of the peace and reconstruction process.

For its part, the international community, including the United Nations, has made efforts in the form of electoral assistance, security sector reform and in training and equipping of Afghan security and defence forces. With regard to electoral aid in particular, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has come into its own in its support for various election processes, particularly the recent parliamentary elections. It is my delegation's hope that the election results will be published following the examination of complaints submitted by various parties.

Furthermore, as Mr. De Mistura has stated, inclusive elections were held that included, inter alia, the overwhelming participation of women. The United Nations agencies, for their part, have worked hard to assist needy populations and to relocate refugees re-entering the country who wished to return to their places of origin.

But these efforts seem to have been cancelled out by the unprecedented ruthlessness of terrorists seeking to impose their will. Clearly, the current unstable security situation is significantly undermining the Government's stabilization efforts and threatens, in the long term, to discredit it in the eyes of the population. That is why we call for increased coordination between the international stakeholders, whether bilateral or multilateral, and the Afghan authorities. In addition, it is important to strengthen the logistics and financial support provided to the Afghan security and defence forces in order to build their operational capacities.

As members will recall, during its latest mission to Afghanistan — a mission that you yourself, Sir, so ably led — the Council noted the complex nature of the security challenges in the country. Indeed, several small groups are fighting for dominance in arms and drugs trafficking. As a result of all of these marginal activities, peace and the security of civilians, security forces and international staff, including that of UNAMA, are under constant threat.

We therefore underline the need to strengthen regional cooperation in order to better face the challenges to peace and security in the region. It would indeed be unrealistic to ignore the implications and regional dimension of the situation in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, we call for enhanced implementation of the decisions taken at the various conferences on Afghanistan, including the London and Kabul Conferences. This means, inter alia, that Afghan priorities must be taken into account regarding long-term security and development in that country. Indeed, the combination of the military, economic, social and political efforts being undertaken seems, from our point of view, to be the most appropriate approach to achieving the goals of peace and stabilization in the country. In that respect, we support the development plan of the Afghan Government. We invite the donor community to provide financial support to that plan.

Before concluding, I reiterate Gabon's support for the role of UNAMA and to welcome the tenacity and professionalism of its personnel under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura. I must recall here the leadership of Turkey on the issue of Afghanistan and the significant contributions of your country, Sir, aimed at re-establishing peace in Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Turkey.

I, too, would like to thank the Secretary-General for his support and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his comprehensive briefing. Let me also extend a sincere welcome to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and reiterate our appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to us during the Council's mission to Afghanistan. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to Mr. De Mistura and the entire staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their hard work and dedicated efforts in Afghanistan.

As I am the last Council member to speak, I will try to be brief and focus on two main issues. First, on the elections, Turkey commends the Government of Afghanistan for holding the second parliamentary elections since 2001 as planned, on 18 September, in spite of the difficult security conditions, and we commend the Afghan people for their active interest and participation in the elections. We condemn all attacks and attempts to undermine the election process by violence, and offer our condolences for those who have lost their lives.

The elections were another step forward in the consolidation of Afghanistan's democratic institutions and national unity. The holding of the elections was made possible by the determined efforts of the Afghan authorities and the support of the international community to this Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process. We are confident that the Afghan electoral bodies will keep up their good work in the weeks ahead. It is particularly important for the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission to deal with all the complaints they receive in a speedy, impartial and transparent manner in order to ensure that reliable final results are announced in due time.

The elections were a critical step in the political process in Afghanistan. With the elections carried out on time and, we hope, the results to be announced in the coming weeks after all the complaints have been dealt with, we can focus in greater depth on Afghanization, which is the second issue I wish to touch into.

Ensuring the durability of the achievements made thus far is directly linked to cementing Afghan ownership and empowering Afghans. The Kabul Conference was a turning point in this regard. The Afghan Government and the international community should now focus on the implementation of the Kabul process, the most important message of which was Afghanization and Afghan ownership. In that regard, we are glad to see that the Afghan Government is showing strong political will to take this process forward and is drawing up concrete implementation plans. The international community should, for its part, be steadfast in its commitments and assist the Afghan Government in a manner that conforms to the conditions, priorities and requirements on the ground.

As foreseen at the Kabul Conference, the phased transfer to Afghan responsibility should be led by the Afghans. It should be conditions-driven and should not be interpreted to mean an exit. Long-term commitment to Afghanistan in all forms required and requested by the Afghans should be emphasized. Transition is possible in an atmosphere of security and stability, which ultimately requires political reconciliation. This process should seek to embrace all segments of society under the leadership of the Afghan Government, giving them fair opportunities to serve the Afghan cause and enable their representation. Afghanistan can overcome the hurdles it has been experiencing only throug enhanced unity and solidarity at the national level.

We also firmly believe that an essential pillar o ensuring the irreversibility of the process under way i Afghanistan is directly linked to regional cooperatio between Afghanistan and its neighbours. This is one o the pillars of the comprehensive approach, whic includes reconciliation. It is in this understanding tha we have organized meetings in various format ranging from January to July, including two summit and two ministerial meetings.

In conclusion, the Kabul Conference was beginning. Its implementation needs determine leadership on the part of the Afghan authorities an close coordination among the Afghan partners. In tha regard, Turkey has pursued the most comprehensiv assistance programme in its history, with variou civilian and military capabilities supportin Afghanistan's historic process of transformation Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is long-term, an its assistance will continue as long as required by th Afghans.

I resume my functions as President of th Council.

I now give the floor to the representative o Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): At the outset, I would lik to thank His Excellency the Foreign Minister o Afghanistan, Mr. Rassoul, and Mr. De Mistura fo participating in this important debate and for thei extremely helpful statements this morning.

On 18 September, the Afghan people voted in th first Afghan-led parliamentary elections since th 1960s. Following the challenges of the 2009 election it was essential for the Independent Electora Commission to demonstrate an improved ability t deliver elections. The Commission has met tha challenge in these parliamentary elections, which wer better organized than the previous ones.

Despite this, clearly, challenges were experience on polling day, which saw violence and has resulted i many allegations of fraud. The violence perpetrated b insurgents on polling day was an affront to th democratic rights of the Afghan people. But the Afgha authorities, supported by the United Nation demonstrated that it was still possible to give Afghan the opportunity to vote. With the Afghan people, we i

the international community now await the final, certified results. The final judgement on the credibility of these elections will be determined by the way in which the IEC and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) handle the counting period. This period may not be without controversy. The IEC and the ECC will need to work in a transparent and efficient manner so that Afghans can see how their complaints and challenges are handled.

Improved election processes are but one aspect of the overall effort in Afghanistan. Canada notes with great appreciation the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation (S/2010/463). The report stated that the Kabul Conference marked a milestone in Afghanistan's transition towards the full exercise of its sovereign authority, and Canada fully agrees. The sectoral plans prepared for the Conference by the Government of Afghanistan demonstrated its increased capacity to coordinate and lead on issues essential to Afghanistan's future security and stability.

However, the Conference is only the first step in the larger Kabul process. While the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the process thus far is encouraging, much work remains to be done. The Government of Afghanistan needs to outline what it believes the next steps of the Kabul process should be and, in particular, to map out its hundred-day plan in order for momentum to be maintained.

Essential to the Kabul process is a mechanism that can ensure the transparent monitoring of the commitments made. We suggest that progress on these commitments should be communicated regularly to Afghans so that they can increasingly hold their own Government to account.

Central to the commitments made in Kabul this July is the effective and sustainable phased transfer of security responsibility to Afghan authorities by 2014. The International Security Assistance Force will facilitate the transition to Afghan security leadership. But to be effective and sustainable, the transition must be owned and accepted by the Afghan authorities and people.

Engagement by the Government of Afghanistan of its citizens will therefore be important throughout. It is encouraging that the Afghan Government has shown greater ownership in this area in recent months. The short-term goals of enabling a security transition should be transparently explained to the Afghan people and appropriate resources set aside by the Government to that end.

Effective transition is dependent upon improved governance, which also featured strongly in the Kabul Conference commitments. In our view, security actors must work closely with their civilian counterparts to ensure that the provinces identified for transition have met the necessary governance conditions. Concrete steps are also required in electoral reform, combating corruption and upholding human rights, if the Government of Afghanistan is going to be truly responsive to the needs of its people.

(*spoke in French*)

The conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved by military means alone. Efforts to bring lasting peace to Afghanistan must involve a dialogue with all parts of Afghan society, including women and vulnerable groups. Any viable reconciliation process in Afghanistan must be Afghan-led, and it must reach out to those who renounce terrorism and who declare their respect for the Afghan Constitution.

The creation of the High Peace Council is an important step in this regard. As the Council begins its work, it will need to demonstrate that it can represent the diverse interests of all people in Afghanistan, regardless of the ethnicity, religion, tribe or gender.

The Kabul Conference recognized that regional cooperation is vital to the long-term peace, stability and recovery of Afghanistan. Sustained and constructive support from Afghanistan's neighbours is needed to undermine the safe havens of those who would attack Afghanistan. Such support will not only bring stability to Afghanistan, but also to the region as a whole. Increased stability and cooperation in South Asia is a precondition for regional trade, something that can increase the prosperity of the region as a whole.

In conclusion, we are encouraged by the progress that has been seen in the past months, as well as by the important commitments agreed upon by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community at the Kabul Conference. However, a great many challenges remain. It is now time to demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan in a practical manner our continued support in order to help the Government of Afghanistan keep the promises it made at the Kabul Conference.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Smith (Norway): Let me first express our sincere support for Special Representative De Mistura, his efforts to implement the newly refocused mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and his commitments to Afghan ownership. In a time of transition towards such ownership, the role of UNAMA is critical, particularly because it is the international guarantor for the integrity of the transition to greater Afghan leadership.

The Kabul Conference was an important step towards greater Afghan ownership. It mobilized broad international support and demonstrated clear commitments by the Afghan Government towards its own people. However, concrete implementation of the commitments at the Conference is key, and donors should start aligning their support with Afghan priorities.

Norway is already contributing its part towards alignment and coherence. Furthermore, a successful Kabul process requires a more robust Afghan leadership. The new national programmes presented at the Conference need to be implemented soon and in a sequenced way through clear targets and priority areas.

Afghan leadership and accountability are paramount for the Kabul process to succeed. Such leadership, in truth, must enable political processes that are inclusive and truly national in their nature. Otherwise, public support for Afghan ownership will decrease.

The recent renewed attention on corruption and administrative misruling also highlight the need for the Afghanistan Government to show stronger political will to combat corruption and to reform State institutions, both of which are prerequisites for a sustainable State-building agenda based on a contract between the Afghan people and their Government.

Furthermore, the Kabul process can only be successful if it really delivers at the provincial and district levels, countrywide. Efforts towards transition, as well as bringing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy to bear throughout the country, point to a more urgent need to enact a viable Afghan subnational governance policy.

As we have emphasized several times before in this Chamber, peace and reintegration in Afghanistan should not only be Afghan-led but must also be based on the principle of inclusiveness and conducted in conformity with the Constitution and international human rights. Norway supports an Afghan-led reconciliation process, including talks with those from the armed opposition who have renounced violence and resumed a civilian life, as parts of a viable broader Afghan political settlement. But this process has to be inclusive, transparent and truly national. Reconciliation requires broad representation of religious, ethnic and civil society groups, including women.

In this regard, we are concerned about the narrow composition of the High Peace Council which was announced by President Karzai yesterday. Many relevant groups from the Afghan community have been left out, including civil society. We are in particular concerned about the limited number of female members of the Council. The participation of women is key to any durable peace process. As next month marks the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, we reiterate the importance of its implementation in this regard.

Furthermore, it is important throughout reintegration and reconciliation efforts not to preclude transitional justice. Addressing issues of transitional justice and human rights in a context of ongoing conflict is challenging, but the Afghan people need to be included in a meaningful way and have their rights protected in the context of a peace process. Injustice is no less a strategic concern than corruption or weak governance.

Norway welcomes the establishment today of the Human Rights Support Unit in the Ministry of Justice and has high expectations of its role in advancing the capacity of the Afghan Government to fulfil its international human rights obligations in a coordinated manner.

It is still early to judge the outcome of the recent parliamentary elections, where preliminary results are expected early next month. The real test will be if the electoral institutions, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission, are able to address complaints and irregularities systematically and impartially. It is not too early, however, to determine the need for long-term electoral reform and increased capacity-building of the Afghan electoral institutions.

Recommendations from Afghan and international observer missions are key in this respect. Such a process must include expanding and strengthening civic education efforts on elections, with the particular aim of including women and civil society groups in the political process.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): Thank you for giving Germany the opportunity to participate in this debate. I would like to commend your Government, Mr. President, for its continued constructive role in promoting regional cooperation in Central and South Asia, in particular through the Ankara Cooperation process. We commend your hosting of the Istanbul Summit on Friendship and Cooperation in the "Heart of Asia" in January of this year. And we are looking forward to the Fourth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, RECCA IV, in Istanbul in early November.

Let me join previous speakers in welcoming the Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan (S/2010/463) and in extending my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his very comprehensive briefing. Furthermore, I would like to express our gratitude to the Foreign Minister, Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, for his valuable and important remarks.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will follow later.

Germany would like to briefly share its views, in particular with regard to the following four topics: legal processes, including reconciliation, promoting regional cooperation, transition of full responsibilities, and recent elections in Afghanistan.

First, the London and Kabul conferences and the Kabul process have strongly reaffirmed the partnership of the international community with the Afghan people and the Afghan Government. We note with satisfaction that the Afghan Government is engaged in implementing the political commitments outlined by President Karzai in his inauguration speech for his second term as well as at the London Conference. We strongly encourage the Afghan Government to continue with this process and to strengthen the Afghan people's trust in their Government and in the democratic process.

We commend President Karzai for the inclusive debate with Afghan leaders in the framework of the Peace Jirga last June and welcome the nominations for a High Peace Council. We encourage him and his Government to take further steps in this direction. This process can only be and must remain an Afghan-led process. The international community can and will only assume a supporting role. In this context, the Afghanistan peace and reintegration programme is a very important element and Germany supports this progamme through the United Nations Development Programme.

Second, regarding the promotion of regional cooperation, we would like to applaud the concrete steps taken by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). Special credit should be given to the Silk Road initiative and its regional leverage. We would like this constructive regional approach to be continued.

Furthermore, as Foreign Minister Rassoul pointed out in his speech in the General Assembly on Monday, the international community's promise to the people of Afghanistan of a life free from fear of the threat of international terrorism remains unfulfilled.

The International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan Government are about to enter the transition phase, where the security responsibility will gradually shift to the Afghan side. This will enable the Afghan Government to fully exercise its sovereignty. During this critical phase, we will remain a reliable partner of Afghanistan and will continue to assist the Afghan people in their struggle to live in peace and prosperity and to enjoy their rights as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution including human rights and women's rights. Our support to the Afghan Government and people will also continue after transition is completed.

Finally, this year's Wolesi Jirga elections constituted an important event for Afghanistan's still young democracy. We would like to applaud the courage of the Afghan people for their participation in these elections, despite the security threats. We encourage the relevant Afghan institutions to address all alleged irregularities and fraud in order to ensure a credible and legitimate electoral process. The lessons learned at these elections will also show the importance of electoral reforms. In this regard, I would like to underline that Germany is prepared to support

the efforts of the Afghan Government in preparing the ground for future elections.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage the Council to support Staffan de Mistura and his team by providing the necessary political guidance. Our expectations regarding UNAMA should remain realistic and focused on key priorities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this debate, and thanks the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2010/463). We acknowledge and welcome the presence of the Afghan Foreign Minister Rassoul and Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and thank him particularly for his extended briefing to the Council.

I will focus on four issues from the Secretary-General's report: elections, the security situation, governance, and the need for a political solution.

Final results are still some weeks away, but one outcome of the elections held on 18 September is already very clear: millions of determined Afghans showed courage and determination and defied threats of violence to elect their Parliament. We congratulate those who voted. They are entitled to see that same resolve mirrored in all levels of their society.

We cannot and we do not hold Afghanistan to the measure of long-standing, mature democracies, but we are disappointed that, in some areas, the elections could not be conducted because of security concerns and we are concerned at reports of widespread voter fraud.

We encourage the Independent Electoral and Election Complaints Commissions to maintain rigorous oversight of the election process and, more specifically, to deal with the reports of fraud, thereby ensuring that the new Parliament better reflects the will of the people and works on their behalf.

Along with other international partners, New Zealand is committed to help Afghanistan take the lead on security, governance, and economic and social development. President Karzai's commitments made at the London Conference in January and the programme of action endorsed in Kabul in July are benchmarks against which Afghanistan's progress will be measured.

We accept that the security backdrop makes progress very difficult. The elections were held during one of Afghanistan's most violent periods since the Taliban was driven from power. Violence has affected Afghans, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Indeed, for ISAF, 2010 has been the worst year of the war with, so far, more than 530 deaths, including New Zealand's first combat fatality.

Although the security situation remains tenuous, we do see welcome signs of improvement. We commend efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces, and are particularly pleased to see numbers increasing ahead of target. We welcome the increase of nearly 40,000 ISAF troops, and also President Karzai's commitment at the Kabul Conference that Afghan National Security Forces will have nationwide, lead responsibility for security by the end of 2014. We will help to facilitate and support that process in Bamyan Province.

Better security will increase opportunities for improved governance, social programmes and economic development. But the benefits of improved governance must be evenly distributed, and they must be sustainable. And they must withstand the scrutiny of those who provide the support and the funding.

Corruption remains a central obstacle to Afghanistan's progress, and it must be relentlessly addressed. Corruption is corrosive; it destroys capacity; it undermines public and international confidence. We look to the Afghan Government to make better progress on addressing corruption and governance issues. That will ensure that with the support of the international community, Afghanistan will increasingly be able to stand on its own.

The new parliament has an important role to play in ensuring confidence in central government and ensuring that the central Government is connected to the provinces, so that together, central and provincial governments can form a cohesive whole. We specifically encourage the parliament to find ways to break the nine-month deadlock that has prevented President Karzai from completing his cabinet.

In Bamyan, New Zealand works on the basis that capable, credible governance remains critical to effective development. We have increased development spending, appointed a development adviser and put the Provincial Reconstruction Team under civilian

leadership for the first time. We have appointed our first Ambassador resident in Kabul. This is consistent with international efforts to balance military and civilian contributions and with Bamyan's transition to Afghan leadership across all areas of security, governance and development.

By itself, fighting will not secure Afghanistan's future; only a political solution can bring lasting peace. That solution must further isolate hard-core insurgency leaders and encourage the majority back into mainstream society. Compromises will be required on all sides, but New Zealand would be alarmed if this process saw the return of the very people who were ousted nine years ago and would be dismayed if a political settlement included official tolerance of repression of women and minorities. We and others have not put our people in harm's way in support of such outcomes.

We will continue to watch for the longer-term outcomes of the Peace Jirga hosted by President Karzai in June. The establishment by the President of the High Peace Council this month is a promising start, but we do need to see results.

Afghanistan's neighbours also have an important role to play in achieving a political solution. New Zealand was encouraged when Pakistan backed the reconciliation process in January, and we welcomed the Pakistan-Afghan declaration on bilateral cooperation in June. Pakistan obviously has an interest in a stable State on its western border, so we look forward to its closer, positive engagement with Afghanistan. Cooperation on essential matters such as border control, trade, policing drug trafficking and combating the insurgency will be essential to help ensure a better future for the region.

Next year will be the high-water mark of international military involvement, with around 150,000 troops from nearly 50 contributing countries in Afghanistan. New Zealand soldiers were among the first to join the campaign against terrorism nearly ten years ago, and today we continue to stand with the people of Afghanistan as they grow as a nation. They have our support in that growth and they have our support in achieving that outcome.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): I would like to begin, Mr. President, by extending my sincere felicitations on the successful Turkish presidency of the Security Council and on your able guidance of the Council's work during this month. I will also compliment the Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is here, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, because I think this time there is a lot of change in the Secretary-General's work. He is emphasizing a change for the better. There seems to be progress. I think that for the first time there is something to be fairly positive about. On the basis of thr quarterly report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/463), I would like to congratulate all of them for the achievements and the movement forward in Afghanistan.

Over the years, the Secretary-General's reports have become a credible pronouncement on progress and setbacks in Afghanistan. I am happy to note that in the latest report, progress outweighs setbacks. That trend must be sustained.

The report of the Secretary General under consideration today has rightly mentioned the Kabul Conference as the major political development of the last three months. The Conference was a landmark event. Its outcome, the Kabul process, has generated the optimism of a destination in sight.

The Kabul process clearly spells out the respective roles of the Afghan Government and the international community in terms of joint commitments and detailed benchmarks. As the Afghan Government assumes greater responsibilities in areas of security, governance and economic and social development, it will need the continuous support of the international community, and this must be forthcoming. It is our sincere hope that parties on both side of this equation will fulfil their mandated tasks. We agree with the Secretary-General that for the Kabul process to succeed, our efforts must be focused on priority areas with appropriate sequencing and coordination.

The Secretary-General has also cautioned that optimism and progress achieved in Afghanistan continue "to be overshadowed by the deterioration in the security situation". He has rightly observed that in the context of security, the Government's efforts to implement peace and reintegration programmes are particularly important.

In a society suffering from four decades of war, the vexing question of security cannot be addressed by another war. Military action alone is not and will not be a solution to Afghanistan's problems.

We share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that a viable reconciliation process is vital for durable and long-term peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan supports an Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process to bring the opposition groups into the political mainstream. We therefore welcome the establishment of the High Peace Council in Afghanistan. It is our hope that the Security Council will continue to be a willing partner of the Afghan Government in the reconciliation process.

Pakistan has always emphasized the importance of regional unity in dealing with challenges of security and development in Afghanistan. The immediate neighbours of Afghanistan have a special role to play in its stability. Pakistan is engaged with other countries in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan. Those initiatives aim at a greater regional connectivity with a view to promoting economic and commercial cooperation and rooting out the menaces of narcotics, terrorism and extremism.

Pakistan is deeply committed to strengthening its ties with Afghanistan in all areas. Our bilateral relations are marked by close cooperation in all fields. There is continuous dialogue and regular exchange of visits at the highest levels. President Hamid Karzai paid an important visit to Pakistan this month. The joint statement issued on the occasion of his visit charts the future trajectory of our bilateral relations.

Earlier, our two countries had successfully concluded the Transit Trade Agreement, upgrading a similar agreement signed in 1962. We have pledged to continue with development projects in Afghanistan, despite our known constraints as a result of the unprecedented floods in Pakistan. We are also engaged in security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan, including through the Tripartite Commission, which also includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Pakistan has commended the Afghan nation and Government and the Independent Election Commission on the successful holding of Wolesi Jirga elections on 18 September. These elections demonstrated the commitment to strengthening democratic traditions and institutions in Afghanistan, despite numerous challenges. And for those who know the region well, I am sure Staffan would confirm how difficult it is to bring democracy there.

We call for early and voluntary returns of the nearly 3 million Afghan refugees who still live in Pakistan. We note progress in this area, with the voluntary return of 91,583 refugees from Pakistan in past three months, as noted in the report. This is a gratifying step forward. We would stress the need to strengthen reintegration programmes for refugees within Afghanistan's development strategy.

Here I should like to say that there are corridors that for centuries have led from Afghanistan eastwards into the heart of India. I think the largest Afghan-led kingdom was in Madyar Pradesh; it went by the name of Bhopal. Interestingly, while in North Waziristan, we are combating terrorism — and the Orakzai tribe specifically — this largest kingdom in India, Bhopal, was an Orakzai kingdom. This shows that it is not sanctuaries that people need to worry about; it is centuries of travel into these areas, which remain where they are. People will come and go. Drawing lines, as we have done — whether it be the Durand or the Maginot in France, which certainly did not stop Hitler — does not stop anyone. People carry around centuries of history and will continue travelling on the routes that they know and accept.

The United Nations, through its Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), under the able leadership of Staffan de Mistura, is playing a commendable role in the country. And the progress we see today is, I think, something that we can credit to him and the great work he has done in the short period that he has been there. Pakistan greatly values UNAMA's activities in the areas of governance assistance, aid delivery, judicial reforms, coordination among donors, humanitarian assistance, the eradication of poppy cultivation, counter-narcotics, and landmine removal. I take this opportunity to reiterate our readiness to provide all possible assistance to Special Representative de Mistura and his team.

As the international community completes the first decade of engagement with Afghanistan after the Bonn process, it must remain steadfast in its commitments and introspective in its conduct. Next month, the Security Council will consider the mandate of ISAF. Meanwhile, the Afghan Government will also be following up on the Kabul Conference and the

reconciliation process. These are important landmarks in our journey to rebuild Afghanistan. Let the history of Afghanistan be our guiding star on this challenging journey.

I conclude with one aspect of that history. The Durand Line was created under the Government of the Amir Abdur Rahman. While today the area is considered a sanctuary, at the time his people asked, "Why have you given away half our country"? He answered, "I put the people I did not want on the other side of that line".

The President: I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We are grateful for the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/493) and are appreciative of the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. We also thank Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, for his statement.

The Kabul Conference marked a new phase in the partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community: the Kabul process and a renewed commitment to a secure, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan. The Conference demonstrated the Afghan Government's determination to take full responsibility for Afghanistan's own development, security and governance, and the international community's willingness to realign international assistance in accordance with Afghanistan's priorities and action plans. The success of the Kabul process will largely depend on detailing and implementing the commitments flowing from the Kabul Conference.

The holding of the National Assembly elections on 18 September, in which over 2,500 candidates contested, was an important step forward in strengthening the democratic framework in Afghanistan. We appreciate the leading role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in providing overall coordination of international support to the electoral process.

India and Afghanistan enjoy a relationship based on history, civilization, trade and cultural exchanges, and shared values and interests stretching back thousands of years. India is committed to the unity, integrity and independence of Afghanistan, underpinned by democracy and cohesive pluralism and free from external interference. India has contributed to these goals through our development partnership, which is implemented entirely in accordance with the priorities of the Afghan Government and people. Our assistance programmes are spread all over Afghanistan and cover all aspects of development: humanitarian assistance, infrastructure, institution- and capacity-building, small-scale quick-gestation projects, and agriculture. The ultimate aim of our assistance, which presently stands at over $1.3 billion, is to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan State and people to stand on their own feet in the areas of governance and services for the Afghan people.

Afghanistan's stability and economic development depend significantly on its neighbours and the region as a whole. Afghanistan's greatest economic potential perhaps resides in its immense potential as a trade, transport and energy hub, and as a bridge linking Central, West and South Asia and the Gulf. Its prosperity also depends on the consumer market of nearly 1.5 billion people in the South Asian subcontinent. The recent reports of Afghanistan's great mineral wealth also open up possibilities for mining and investment.

But if Afghanistan is to realize its full potential in these areas, its neighbours need to come together to forge greater regional cooperation and facilitate trade and transit. Growing economic interdependence will also help to wean disaffected youth away from insurgency and militancy and to create a zone of co-prosperity in the region. We support the wishes of the Government of Afghanistan to take the lead in this direction.

Peace and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan can succeed provided they are fully Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and bring all sections of Afghanistan's population together, and provided they abide by the redlines agreed to at the London Conference: giving up violence, cutting off all links with terrorism, and accepting the democratic and pluralistic values of the Afghan Constitution, including women's rights.

The international community must learn lessons from past experiences in negotiating with fundamentalist and extremist organizations, and ensure that any peace process is conducted in an inclusive and transparent manner. Adequate capacity of the Afghan

security forces and other Afghan institutions is a sine qua non for protecting Afghanistan's sovereignty, plurality and democracy. The gains of the past nine years stand to be squandered if this aspect does not receive the attention that it deserves as the international community ponders its next steps regarding Afghanistan.

The international community should also ensure that there is no selectivity in dealing with terrorism. The fight against terrorism cannot be compartmentalized. One cannot distinguish between Al-Qaida and the plethora of terrorist organizations that have imbibed the goals and techniques of Al-Qaida. The security and stabilization of Afghanistan will remain a distant goal unless we are able to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, the Lashkar e Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating from within and outside Afghanistan's borders. It is therefore essential to ensure that support, sustenance and sanctuaries for terrorist organizations from outside Afghanistan are ended forthwith.

As we debate today, it is worrisome that there has been a continued and continuing deterioration in the security environment. The Secretary-General's report notes that there has been a 69 per cent increase in security incidents compared to the same months in 2009.

In conclusion, the international community as a whole has made a great contribution to assisting Afghanistan to stand on its own feet. The Kabul Conference was a big step in the right direction. It is important that the international community remain steadfast in its commitment to supporting Afghanistan. We welcome these efforts and are fully supportive of them. We support the good work done by UNAMA.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Pedro Serrano, head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano: I thank you very much, Sir, for giving the floor to the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Iceland; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

Let me start by thanking the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan for his important statement, and reiterate the support of the European Union to the efforts of the Afghan Government. I also wish to join others in expressing our support for the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/463) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and thanking Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his dedication and tireless efforts in Afghanistan. We value very highly the cooperation between UNAMA and the European Union.

The European Union commends Afghanistan on the recent holding of its second parliamentary elections since 2001. While it is too early to make a full assessment of the polls, the European Union wishes to highlight the thorough preparations, which were largely ensured by Afghan institutions and have incorporated some of the lessons from last year's elections. Above all, we pay tribute to the millions of Afghans who courageously exercised their democratic rights under such challenging circumstances. The European Union deplores the loss of life and condemns all those who have sought to undermine the electoral process, including through acts of violence.

We now look to the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission to address irregularities and complaints in a transparent, impartial and principled manner. This will be the real test in the weeks ahead. We also trust that all will be done to ensure that all women who have run for office and won can take up their mandates. Moreover, it will be necessary to reach out to areas in which the turn-out was very low due to lack of security so as to avoid the further disenfranchisement of parts of the population. Beyond these elections, it remains highly important to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral framework. The European Union acknowledges the Afghan Government's pledges made at the Kabul Conference in this regard, and is committed to supporting such electoral reforms in the future.

More generally, the European Union welcomes the results of the Kabul Conference and regards its as a success, in particular as it mobilized broad international support for and Afghan buy-in to the overall transition process. Our focus must now be on making the concrete implementation plans a reality and on assisting the fulfilment of the benchmarks which were set. What is required more than ever is strong political will on the part of the Afghan Government to

see necessary reforms through and the unwavering strong support of the international community, including for much needed capacity-building.

The European Union is acutely aware that improving governance and development is a long-term process and has therefore repeatedly committed itself to a bold and long-term engagement in Afghanistan. As Council members are aware, the European Union is highly committed to helping not only to meet humanitarian needs, but also with reconstruction and stabilization in Afghanistan. During the period 2011-2013, we will increase assistance to some €200 million per annum. The European Union as a whole is investing nearly €1 billion every year, focusing our assistance on the areas of the rule of law, governance, rural development, agriculture and health.

Between 2002 and the end of 2009, the European Commission's support to Afghanistan alone amounted to €1.8 billion, including €282 million in humanitarian assistance. Given the worsening humanitarian situation in areas of the country, the European Union will continue to focus resources on addressing the basic needs of the population, and calls on other partners to take a similar approach. More broadly, the Plan for Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, adopted in October 2009, provides the framework for EU engagement across a range of sectors in the country.

Much of the transition will hinge on the Government's ability to ensure security and to obtain the necessary support from the population. This will require not only tangible results in terms of socio-economic development, but also continued institutional reform, including of the police and the judicial system — two priority areas of EU assistance. The EU Police Mission is in fact contributing to the build-up of civilian policing, including the reform of the Afghan Uniformed Police and the Afghan Anti-Crime Police. Enhanced efforts are also necessary to ensure transparency and tackle corruption and to make progress in the field of reintegration and reconciliation.

As we highlighted in this Chamber earlier this year, this process needs to be Afghan-led, inclusive and conducted in conformity with the Constitution and Afghanistan's international commitments, including on human rights. As we shall soon all commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the European Union wishes in particular to highlight the importance of respecting women's rights and their role in this process. Despite some progress made regarding the situation of women and girls, much more has to be done in this respect.

Equally, the European Union continues to be concerned by the reported increase of civilian casualties, in particular affecting Afghan children and women, with the Taliban and other extremist groups being responsible for the escalation of the human cost of the conflict.

The European Union also actively supports dialogue between Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as practical regional cooperation, and welcomes an enhanced role of the United Nations in that regard.

In closing the European Union wishes to thank Special Representative De Mistura and his staff for implementing an ambitious and refocused UNAMA mandate under difficult circumstances. We also commend the Afghan Government's commitment to reform and its intensified efforts. We encourage everyone to fully seize the opportunities of the current mobilization of international attention and assistance in support of progress towards security and prosperity for Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): While Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, I would also like to add a few comments. The parliamentary elections of 18 September represented another step in the right direction towards a democratic, open and sovereign Afghanistan whose future is shaped by the will of the Afghan people themselves. My country therefore commends the Afghan authorities for their timely and proper organization of the balloting and the millions of Afghans who courageously exercised their democratic rights in such a challenging environment.

We also express our gratitude to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and particularly to Special Representative De Mistura for this morning's very useful briefing, and especially for his pivotal role in coordinating the numerous initiatives aimed at providing international support to these elections.

Although the process continues, we think that for the elections to be credible, the Afghan electoral institutions must be able to operate in a fully independent, transparent and professional manner. It is in the interest of Afghanistan to strengthen its electoral institutions at all levels, and Italy is ready to work with the Afghan Government and Parliament to ensure that the lessons learned are fully taken into account in order to reform and improve the electoral system as a whole.

Elections are part of a transition process that was streamlined at the Kabul Conference as a monitored and conditions-based strategy aimed towards Afghan responsibility in security, governance and development. The process must be founded on those conditions, which must be met through a joint sustainable effort. In this context, we deem it necessary to establish a transition-enabled environment by strengthening civilian cooperation and improving the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces. Enhancing the training and mentoring of Afghan forces is also part of the transition strategy.

This process also requires major endeavours in the area of justice, rule of law and governance. Italy remains convinced that development and governance are interlinked and must evolve in parallel; otherwise, real advancement will not be sustainable. Thus supporting governance mechanisms will create the conditions necessary to expand the sovereignty of legitimate institutions and to respond to people's needs.

Italy has expanded the portion of its civilian effort dedicated to capacity-building. We take part in the European Union multilateral efforts and count on the excellence of the Italian national school of public administration to train Afghan diplomats and civil servants and to provide assistance to Afghan anti-corruption police.

In addition, my country is committed to fostering the rule of law, the justice sector, the promotion of human rights and the role of women in Afghanistan. To live up to our commitment, we will continue our long-standing effort, which so far has provided training for 3,700 judges, prosecutors and officials and also established in Kabul a gender unit comprised of nine female prosecutors aimed at protecting women from abuse.

While we will spare no effort to support the way forward agreed upon at Kabul, we call upon the Afghan authorities to take further steps in order to make progress and ensure the practical realization of the commitments made at the Conference. We also encourage further efforts by the international community to channel its funds through the Afghan budget and support the Afghan national development strategy; and by the Afghan authorities to establish a set of checks and balances aimed at ensuring the independence of key anti-corruption agencies.

My country confirms its commitment to ensuring the highest level of Afghan ownership and it is already channelling most of its funds through the Afghan budget and supporting national programmes within the framework of the aforementioned strategy.

Italy considers it essential to recognize that in the framework of the Kabul process, reintegration and possibly reconciliation are necessary. We believe that those who renounce violence and terrorism and pledge to respect the Constitution should be given the chance to participate in the reconstruction of their own country.

However, to be acceptable to the Afghans and to our public opinion at home, those endeavours must remain within the red lines set at the London Conference. We should all play a consistent diplomatic role to bring regional actors to the side of Afghanistan. More than ever, we remain persuaded that regional cooperation is essential to stabilize the country. It will encourage better coordination of the existing international and regional initiatives under the aegis of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): Thank you, Sir, for convening this open discussion by the Security Council on Afghanistan. We welcome the regular briefings provided by Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and we are very pleased to welcome the Foreign Minister, Mr. Rassoul, back to New York.

These discussions highlight the real stake that we — the international community — has in Afghanistan's stability and our commitment through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help Afghanistan address its many challenges.

Over the past year, Australia has built up its civilian engagement in that country. Since the London

Conference in January, we have delivered a 50 per cent increase in our civilian commitment. We now have over 50 civilian personnel, including in Uruzgan Province, where we head the Provisional Reconstruction Team.

We have also increased our development assistance to Afghanistan by 50 per cent this year, to around $106 million and I think that brings us to about $700 million delivered in development assistance since 2001. In doing this, we are aligning ourselves with the priorities outlined by the Afghan Government itself under its national development strategy and we are channelling at least half of our development assistance through Afghan Government systems, consistent with the undertakings we made at the Kabul Conference in July.

These civilian enhancements are very important, but they build also on Australia's military contribution to Afghanistan which, as the Council knows, now consists of something over 1,500 Australian Defence Force personnel.

Australia strongly supports the Afghan Government's goals and planning for the assumption of full authority for security and also Afghanistan's plans on the transition process. I will not go through all of my talking points because I think we are all in agreement on those points. We note, however, that transition is not just about security. It is also about improving governance capacity and the development of conditions necessary for stability. We recognize that military efforts alone will not end the conflict and that a long-term solution requires political effort and ultimately reconciliation between the Afghan Government and the insurgents. We therefore welcome the Afghan-led process on reconciliation and reintegration, aimed at winning over marginal supporters of the insurgency through targeted programmes.

In that respect, Australia also welcomes the Afghan Government's announcement of the appointment of almost 70 people, including women, to the new High Peace Council and its Special Peace and Reintegration Sub-Committee.

While Australia, like others, is naturally concerned that the recent parliamentary elections were affected by violence and fraud, the fact that so many ordinary Afghans had the courage to cast a vote in the face of threats and intimidation — and I note the dark ink on the fingers of both the Foreign Minister and Mr. De Mistura — clearly shows how much they value a better future for their country. This was an Afghan-led and Afghan-managed process; Afghan security forces provided the security for polling places and did an effective job; and, as pointed out by Mr. De Mistura elsewhere, they had the courage to acknowledge where their limitations were and to accept that not all polling places would be open. So we have a balance of optimism and honesty in this process.

In due course it will also be important, however, that the allegations of misconduct are investigated by Afghan authorities in accordance with Afghan law. And the Afghan Government knows that, in the medium to long term, it needs to make progress in meeting its commitments to electoral reform to provide for fair and transparent elections in the future.

All of Afghanistan's neighbours share critical interests in Afghanistan's security and long-term stability and can play a constructive role in promoting Afghanistan's social and economic development. I therefore listened with great interest to some of the speakers on that subject late this morning. In this regard, UNAMA's efforts to encourage regional countries to cooperate in halting the narcotics trade and the illegal movement of people as well as to support Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve security and stability are very much welcome.

There have been setbacks and there will be more, but we are also seeing real progress. In 2002, 9 per cent of Afghans had access to health care; today that figure is 65 per cent. Afghan women hold almost a quarter of all seats in Afghanistan's National Assembly, a stark contrast to conditions under the oppressive Taliban rule. The number of teachers has almost doubled since 2002, and access to education has grown dramatically.

We need to build on this progress. It is important that the Afghan Government and its international partners, including Australia, remain committed to and focused on the tasks at hand: combating the insurgency, fighting corruption, and improving governance and the delivery of essential services to the Afghan people.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura, if he wishes to respond to some of the comments.

Mr. de Mistura: If I may, I will take the liberty to also respond on behalf of my friend, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, in saying that everything we heard has helped us a lot. The Security Council's support of and guidance to the Afghan Government and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan are crucial. We need it and we need to hear it, because the next months are going to be even more challenging in view of the two areas on which we will be focusing in particular.

I wish to thank the Council members on behalf, if I may, of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and myself.

The President: I thank the Special Representative for his comments. I wish to repeat that we are also thankful to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for his participation in today's meeting, as well as for his insightful statement. We wish him all success.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.